Methodist Mission and Practice: Understanding Our Past to Transform Our Future
RECU 70970/80970 -010

Summer 2017
HAR 204
July 10 – 14, 2017
9 AM to 5 PM

Instructor: Tiffany Steinwert           tsteinwe@wellesley.edu  617-372-1233

Prerequisites: None

Description of Content:
This course will explore the intersections of Wesleyan missional praxis and contemporary community organizing. Reading the history of early Wesleyan mission through the lens of community organizing, we will identify five key organizing practices employed in the early Methodist movement which can inform mission strategies today. Students will engage in skills building workshops in partnership with a local United Methodist mission to learn the five key missional practices in a concrete ecclesial setting.

By the end of this course, students will:

- Identify key practices of Wesleyan missional praxis including testimonies, camp meetings, class meetings, connectionalism, and evangelism.
- Understand and engage in the five key community organizing practices of:
  - Public Narrative
  - Relationship Building
  - Team Building
  - Strategizing
  - Action
- Compare Wesleyan missional praxis with contemporary community organizing practices.
- Critically reflect on the role of community organizing in Wesleyan missional praxis in the early American movement and in the contemporary Church.

Class Procedures:
The class will be a one-week intensive seminar with lectures, discussions, and small group practicums throughout the week. Students will spend mornings in a seminar setting exploring the history and theology of Wesleyan mission and the afternoons engaging in community organizing practices rooted in the Wesleyan tradition.

Learning is an active process through which a community of scholars engages both theory and practice to forge new understanding. In this way, the class will be student centered and driven, requiring students to come as active participants in constructing knowledge. Through
discussions of texts, presentation of new material, and team exercises, I seek to elicit the analysis, insights, and questions of the class, rather than dictate particular content. The goal of the class is not to regurgitate the information read in the assigned texts or heard in lectures, but rather to use the texts and lectures as springboards for conversations, questions and new practices. The class will not review required material for content, but rather will use it as a resource for our time together both in class and referenced in written assignments. The texts become conversation partners for us as we explore the issues together. In all discussions and assignments, I expect students to critically reflect on the material presented, using their own insights, questions and concerns to bring new understanding to the topics studied. As a professor, I care more about what students think about the material covered, than their ability to summarize it. As a communal process, learning requires students to work together in respectful and collaborative ways.

Requirements:

1. **Attendance and informed participation in the class sessions**: Students are required to attend and be on time for all class sessions. Students are also expected to read all course material prior to coming to class, to fully participate in seminar discussions and to actively contribute to small group exercises. Due daily.

2. **Critical reflection papers (8-10 pages)**: Students are required to write daily 1-2 page reflection papers that bring Wesleyan missional praxis and contemporary community organizing principles in dialogue with each other. Students will receive 5 assignments that include focus questions to help them reflect on the day’s work. Due daily.

3. **Group Community Organizing**: Students are required to work in small groups to design a mission project using the five key community organizing practices. Students must complete group exercises together and submit work sheets to be completed as a group at the end of each daily session. Due daily.

4. **Reflection paper (Masters Level 10 - 15 pages; DMin level 20-25 pages)**: Students are required to write a final reflection paper that explore the intersections of Wesleyan missional praxis and contemporary community organizing. Papers should address the following questions:
   a. What key missional practices led to the success of the early Methodist movement in America?
   b. What was the relationship between these practices and Wesleyan theology? In answering this question, you should reflect on: the ways these practices were grounded in Wesleyan theology, the ways these practices shaped Wesleyan theology, and the ways these practices may have conflicted with Wesleyan theology.
   c. Where do you see the five key practices of contemporary community organizing at work in the early Methodist movement in America? Be certain to cite specific examples. Describe the Methodist missional practice and how it functioned as a core community organizing practice. Locate all five key community organizing principles in the Methodist movement. Reflect on the emphasis and effectiveness of each of the practices. If you feel as though some of the community organizing practices were absent in the movement, note that and cite specific examples where a key practice may have better informed the early Methodist movement.
   d. How can contemporary community organizing practices inform Wesleyan missional praxis today? Use your group project to reflect on the ways in which contemporary
community organizing practices might benefit current Wesleyan mission. How might the five key practices be employed in mission today?

Required Texts:


Excerpts Provided by the Instructor:


Grading Procedures:

- Class Participation: 25%
- Critical Reflection Papers: 25%
- Group Project: 20%
- Final Reflection Paper: 30%