

**North Park Theological Seminary**  
**MNST 6274 Living Responsibly in the Realm of God** (3 credits)  
NOTES FOR 2010

**Note:** This syllabus is posted as of December 21, 2009. The professors reserve the right to make schedule changes as needed.

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**Course Description:**

In this course we will explore the implications of faithful living in what God has given us, understood biblically as it relates to areas of justice, stewardship, and community health in ministry. Taking seriously the view that whatever exists belongs to God and that our role in it is as stewards and caretakers, we will probe how such a view will relate to matters of health, not just of individuals, but communities and institutions.

Class meets Tuesday and Thursday from 3:15 – 4:45PM. Student participation is expected in all sessions so that we may all benefit from each others' insights.

**Course Objectives:**

In order to think theologically and personally about what it means for Christians as individuals, and in community, to live responsibly in God's world, the following will be explored:

1. Living responsibly in today's world from a communal perspective
2. Developing Biblical rationales in thought and practice for living responsibly
3. Understanding the call for justice as it informs living responsibly in God's realm
4. Understanding the responsibility of stewardship for God's world and God's gifts
5. Understanding health for all God's people as a community responsibility
6. Considering the complexity in both the challenges of living responsibly in God's realm as well as the opportunities for faithful living
7. Discerning how individual decisions influence the community
8. Appropriating *shalom* as a mode and purpose of being and acting
9. Planning for next steps in one's own communal and personal discipleship in the ministries of justice, stewardship and health.

**Texts:**

1. Paul Farmer. Pathologies of Power: Health, Human Rights and the New War on the Poor (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005). ISBN 0-520-24326-9.
2. Daniel Groody. Globalization, Spirituality and Justice (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2007). ISBN 978-1-57075
3. Lauren Tyler Wright. Giving (Woodstock, VT: Skylight Paths, 2008) ISBN 9781594732249

4. Note: All students will be reading the above three texts. For the four books below, students are assigned to read one of the following books.

**If your last name begins with A-Carlson, A.**

Nikki Toyama & Tracy Gee. More Than Serving Tea (Downers Grove, Intervarsity, 2006) ISBN 9780830833719

**If your last name begins with Carlson, B – H**

Andrea Smith. Native Americans and the Christian Right (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008) ISBN 9780822341635

**If your last name begins with I-On**

Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo. Religion and Social Justice for Immigrants (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2007) ISBN 978-0-8135-3908-9

**If your last name begins with Op-Z**

Emmanuel Katongole & Chris Rice. Reconciling All Things. (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2008) ISBN 9780830834518

**Assignments:**

1. **Participation.** Students are expected to be present in class, actively participate in discussion, and function as a team member in book teams and on the group project.
2. **Autobiography** In five pages reflect on the significant events in your own life in regard to the use of, and your feelings about, money and possessions. This reflection should tell stories of your life including formative events. Due February 18.<sup>th</sup> Papers received after February 25<sup>th</sup>, without prior permission of the professor will receive a failing grade.
3. **Essay Exam:** There will be one essay exam based on the class reading. The criteria for grading on the quizzes will be integration of course material and self reflection.
4. **Book Teams:** The class is divided into four teams based on your last name. Each team will be reading a book as noted under Texts. Each team will be responsible for developing an interactive class presentation and discussion. The team will determine a brief reading assignment for the rest of the class. Each individual will write a one page reflection on what the book means to her/him personally in terms of the themes of the course.  
**Integrative Assignment:** The purpose of this project will be to integrate one's ministry perspective, theology and personal life as it relates to the topics of living responsibly that have been discussed in class. It is expected that the project should involve about 10 hours of active involvement. A 3-5 page reflection paper is required for the chosen activity addressing why you chose this particular activity, what you learned and why you would recommend or not recommend to someone else to do this again.
5. Plans for the integrative project will be identified by April 8<sup>th</sup>. Due: May 4. Artistic projects will be shared in class. Options for this project include the following:

**Artistic Activity:** Create a painting, poetry, music or composition that communicates your integration of the course material

**Political Activity:** Engage in a political activity for the purpose of addressing an issue of justice, stewardship or community health.

**Congregational Engagement:** Those who are presently working in ministry can engage their congregation in an issue of justice & community health.

**6. Group Project:** Students will work in teams of 3-4 to explore an issue that affects the health of communities through the lens of justice and stewardship by exploring the issue from multiple facets and identifying possible responses of the church. Considering how to say yes in a world that says no, topics will be chosen from the following:

- Peacemaking in the midst of conflict & violence
- We're in this together: Gender & justice
- All are welcome at the table: The church and ministries with persons who are disabled
- Shelter in the Storm: Welcome voices for persons who are homeless
- Sustainable living: Can less be more?
- The gospel of wealth: The American dream or nightmare?
- The challenges of HIV/AIDS for the church
- Living in Christian community: Practicing the faith together

Groups will discuss the issue from more than one perspective, identify relevant biblical themes, provide an annotated list of resources and describe possible ways in which the church might respond that would represent responsible living in the realm of God. Group presentations will be made to the class as scheduled.

Grading of the group project will be based on demonstrated integration (including the articulation of varied perspectives on the same issue), application and analysis.

### **Steps for the group project**

- A. Identify expectations for group participation, how you will communicate and how the work will be divided. A small group discussion board will be available for you on Blackboard. Identify how various perspectives might consider your issue.
- B. Identify how the themes of health, justice & stewardship are integrated in your issue that will be the focus of your group work, which will be submitted as a brief description on March <sup>3rd</sup>, following class discussion.
- C. How does scripture inform your discussion of this issue?
- D. Each member of the group is to gather information on organizations engaged in ministry around their issue. Class time on April 22<sup>nd</sup> class time has been allocated for this area of data collection that may involve site visits or phone conversations. In the class presentation and your resource list you will identify the two organizations you believe to be most effective. If possible for your topic, identify a domestic and an international agency.
- E. Through group discernment identify a practice you will engage in as a group related to your topic, such as fasting that requires some sacrifice. Possible fasts: plastic items, TV, credit cards, foods (meat, fast food, bottled water), driving, games, shopping for non-essentials or luxury items. Positive things – record of money spent, recycling, befriend unknown international student or member of your church, Group will pick discipline associated with topic but not necessarily limited to topic.

Fast will occur from March 23 – April 23. Each member will submit a paragraph about his/her participation in discipline that will be included in the grade for participation. Due April 27.

- F. What resources, written, personal and organizational might be available to help you better understand this issue. Note: You will be submitting an annotated list of resources including articles and books. While the internet has many valuable resources, your resource list should go beyond what is online.
- G. Prepare your presentation to creatively engage your fellow students in considering your issue. Be mindful of the time allocated for your group in preparing your content. The following should be included:
  1. Explanation of the issue from more than one perspective
  2. Key biblical themes/texts relevant to each perspective (could be in opposition to and/in support of)
  3. Suggestions for how individual churches or larger church bodies might become more responsibly involved in your issue.
  4. Submit an annotated list of your best resources

**7. Complete the assigned weekly reading.** A signoff sheet indicating the completion of the required reading will be turned in at mid-term and the end of the course.

<b>Assignment Calendar</b>	
<b>Assignment</b>	<b>Date Due</b>
<i>Money Autobiography</i>	Thursday, February 18
<i>Book Team Class Presentations</i>	March 2 & 4
<i>Essay Exam</i>	Given out in class Thurs. March 18 due Monday, March 22 midnight
<i>Group Project:</i> brief description of stewardship, justice & health themes in topic	Thursday, March 25
<i>Group Project:</i> Class presentations	TBA
<i>Group Project:</i> Paragraph reflecting on fast	Tuesday, April 27
<i>Integrative Assignment</i>	Tuesday, May 4

**Grading:**

- 1. Attendance & Participation                      10%
- 2. Autobiography                                      10%
- 3. Essay Exam    20%
- 4. Group Project                                        25%
- (Class peers will participate in evaluation and grading of each of the group projects)
- 5. Integrative Activity                                20%
- 6. Book Teams    15% (5% individual reflection + 10% group class)

**Late Assignments:** Late work will be penalized 1/3 of a letter grade for each day that the assignment is late.

**Criteria for grading written assignments and projects:**

- A/A- Well-written with no errors (spelling, sentence fragments, unclear sentences, etc.). Excellent analysis and well-supported conclusions. Demonstrates complex understanding of topic and familiarity with supporting sources (readings, online resources and discussion). Fully and clearly responsive to question(s) asked.
- B/B- Moderately well-written with few errors. Good analysis and well-supported conclusions. Demonstrates correct understanding of topic and familiarity with most supporting sources (readings, online resources and discussion).
- C/C- Content may show either less than correct familiarity with the topic or bulk of supporting sources, is not fully responsive to the question(s) asked, or is poorly written (major mistakes made).

**Academic Honesty:**

In keeping with our Christian heritage and commitment, North Park is committed to the highest possible ethical and moral standards. Just as we will constantly strive to live up to these high standards, we expect our students to do the same. To that end, cheating of any sort will not be tolerated. Students who are discovered cheating are subject to discipline up to and including failure of a course and expulsion. For further information on this subject you may refer to the Academic Dishonesty section of the University’s online catalog.

**Students with disabilities** North Park Theological Seminary provides services for students with documented disabilities to ensure equal access to programs, services, facilities, and activities. Students with a disability who believe that they may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to contact Seminary Academic Services as soon as possible. If desired or necessary, discussion pertaining to documentation and accommodation can take place at another suitable location or by telephone. Further information about the American Disabilities Act Services is found in the Student Academic Handbook.

**CLASS SCHEDULE**

Reading assignments are being updated. The class schedule will be updated with specific reading assignments and will be available the first day of class.

*Each week will include discussion questions from the reading that highlight key topics. Come prepared to engage the material in discussion.*

**Week one: February 2 & 4**

**2<sup>nd</sup>**     ***Introductions & Course Overview***  
          ***The Realm of God***

**Assignment in Class:** Book Teams

#### 4<sup>th</sup> *Human Responsibility*

**Reading:** TBD

**Discussion Questions:**

- Groody, p 29, questions 3, 4, 6, 8
- Farmer suggests that human rights abuses are best understood from the point of view of the poor. How do you respond to his argument? Are there other perspectives that need to be part of the conversation?

#### Week two: February 9 &11

#### 9<sup>th</sup> *Biblical Justice*

**Reading:** TBD

**Discussion Questions:**

- How do we discuss things about which we disagree?
- Groody, p 57, questions 1,2,7, 9
- What images of “doing justice” do you resonate with from the Covenant Quarterly and why?
- What difference does it make for Christian living if you consider justice as a noun or as a verb?

#### 11<sup>th</sup> *Biblical Perspectives on Stewardship I*

**Reading:** TBD

**Discussion Questions:**

- What might be the primary metaphor(s) you could use to describe stewardship in your ministry?
- In what ways might stewardship be a Western culturally-bound concept?
- What actions define you as a steward?

#### Week 3 February 16 & 18

#### 16<sup>th</sup> *A Biblical Perspective on Health & the Community*

**Reading:** TBD

**Discussion Questions**

- What does Isaiah 58 tell you about what is required to be healthy?
- What are the connections between individual and community health reflected in this passage?
- Consider this passage from the perspective of; someone with wealth and power in the community, and; someone who is poor and oppressed within the community

- What challenge does this passage offer you?
- What hope does this passage offer you?

**18<sup>th</sup> *Opportunities for Health: A Right or a Privilege?***

**Reading:** TBD

**Discussion Questions:**

- How does a biblical perspective on health and the community inform this discussion?
- How does a biblical perspective on stewardship and justice inform this discussion?
- How might the Declaration of Independence when it identifies an “inalienable right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness,” relate to the discussion of a right to that which promotes health?

**Assignment Due:** Money Autobiography

Week four: February 23 & 25

**23<sup>rd</sup> *Healthcare: A Right or a Privilege?***

**Reading:** TBD

**Discussion Questions:**

- What role, if any, should the church play in improving access to health care? Why?
- In the denominational statements, how are they articulating access to health care as an issue of faith?
- How might the Declaration of Independence when it identifies an “inalienable right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness,” relate to the discussion of a right to that which promotes health?
- What is the difference between talking about the right to health care and a right to opportunities for health?

**25<sup>th</sup> *Stewardship of Hope***

**Reading:** TBD

**Discussion Questions**

- TBD

Week five: March 2 & 4

**2<sup>nd</sup> Book Teams lead class**

**Reading:** TBD

**4<sup>th</sup> Book Teams lead class**

**Reading:** TBD

**SPRING BREAK: March 8-12**

Week six: March 16 & 18

16<sup>th</sup> ***Biblical Stewardship part 2 - Time***

**Reading:** TBD

**Discussion Questions**

- How does Sabbath function in your life, if at all?
- How might you intend to keep the Sabbath in the future?
- Regarding the “encomium” in the Corinthian text (II, 8 and 9): What stewardship principles do you find therein? What problematic do you find in the text?

In Class: Project Groups to be determined

18<sup>th</sup> ***Philanthropy as Stewardship*** – Invited: Susan Schaefer, DMin, MDiv, MBA, Director, Out of the Box Foundation

**Reading:** TBD

**Discussion Questions:**

- If you were a pastor/leader in a wealthy congregation what challenges and opportunities might you experience in talking about stewardship?
- Groody, p. 89, 5-7

**ASSIGNMENT: Essay Exam** Take home essay exam will be posted on Blackboard and is due by midnight, Monday, March 22<sup>nd</sup>

Week seven: March 23 & 25

23<sup>rd</sup> ***Stewardship of Money & Possessions***

**Reading:** TBD

**Discussion Questions:**

- Which of the programs on personal money management appeals to you the most and why?
- What do you presently own that you might not need?
- How much \$ is enough?
- What does Matthew 6:24 mean for your life of discipleship?

25<sup>th</sup> ***Stewardship of Persons and Truth***

**Reading:** TBD

**Discussion Questions:** TBD

**ASSIGNMENT IN CLASS:** Identify how the themes of health, justice & stewardship are integrated in your issue that will be the focus of your group work, submitted as a brief description following class discussion.

Week eight March 30 & April 1

**30<sup>th</sup>** *Globalization* - Invited: Dr. Paul DeNeui

**Reading:** TBD

**Discussion Questions**

- What do you think are the positive aspects of globalization? What are its negative features? (Groody, p 29)
- What do you think is the contribution of theology to globalization? Globalization's contribution to theology? (Groody, p 29)

**April 1<sup>st</sup>** *Global Dimensions of Health*

**Reading:** TBD

**Discussion Questions:**

- Myers talks about doing no harm and the significance of sustainability when working with the poor. What are the implications of this for local as well as international ministries?
- How do the international examples of health issues that Farmer sites your understanding of health issues in the US?
- What can Christians learn about promoting health from communities with limited material resources around the world?

Week nine: April 6 & 8

**6<sup>th</sup>** *Churches Promoting Healthy Communities*

**Reading:** TBD

**Discussion Questions:**

- How do you understand the real and potential role of churches and faith-based organizations in promoting healthy communities?  
Groody, p. 266 - 1,7

**8<sup>th</sup>** *Promoting Justice through your Church & Community*

Invited: Rev. Debbie Blue, Executive Minister, Department of Compassion, Mercy and Justice, ECC

**Reading:** TBD

**Discussion Questions:**

- Groody, page 209, questions 1, 5 & 9, pages 209
- When in your experience has love not been enough?

- What role does prayer play in promoting justice?

Week ten: April 13 & 15

**13<sup>th</sup> *Creation Care***

**Reading:** TBD

**Discussion Questions:**

- Identify ways that creation care is part of your daily life of discipleship, if at all.
- What might you find silly or extreme or essential in ecological awareness?
- What voices not in the reading have a contribution to make to this discussion?

**15<sup>th</sup> Nyvall Lecture and Related Activities**

**Reading:** TBD

Week eleven: April 20 & 22

**20<sup>th</sup> *Living Responsibly in your own Backyard***

**Reading:** TBD

**Discussion Questions:** TBD

**22<sup>nd</sup> This class time is to be used for a site visit related to your group project. We will not meet as a class**

Week twelve: April 27 & 29

**27<sup>th</sup> *Student Presentations***

**ASSIGNMENT DUE:** Paragraph reflecting on fast (see group project)

**29<sup>th</sup> *Student Presentations***

Week thirteen: May 4

**4<sup>th</sup> *Student Presentations***

**ASSIGNMENT DUE: Integrative Assignment**