**D.Min. Colleague Seminar I (DM-810)**

Fall 2024

In this first semester of Core Colleague Seminar courses, we will explore the changing social and cultural reality within American religious life for the region and nation. Through readings, lectures, discussions, guest presentations, and perhaps virtual field trips we will explore the contextual challenges facing ministry in a variety of settings. We will also explore possible creative and practical solutions to address these challenges. Students will reflect organizationally and theologically on the relevance and salience of these approaches as well as other possible solutions within their specific tradition’s framework and ministry setting.

Required of all first-year D.Min. students.

**Retreat**- September 19th – 21st

**Synchronous Class** - Monday 6:00 pm – 9:00 pm Sept 30, Oct 14, Oct 28, Nov 11, Nov 25, and Dec 9 on Zoom with additional asynchronous reading and online work on the Canvas course site between the meeting times.

**Scott Thumma**
*Professor of Sociology of Religion*

email: sthumma@hartfordinternational.edu

**Objectives:**

a. To develop a better understanding of the challenges and possibilities for ministry in a contemporary context;

b. To explore contemporary research on social, cultural, and religious trends in order more accurately to understand one’s own ministry setting and community;

c. To engage in sustained reflection on leadership practices and ways to approach change within one’s own ministry setting and community;

e. To deepen skills for critical thinking and reflection that are essential in the D.Min. program;

f. To enhance engagement with a diverse set of colleagues.

**Identified HIU Learning Outcomes: Doctor of Ministry:**

1. To demonstrate knowledge of the larger social and cultural dynamics affecting religious life and

organizations in the 21st century and their implications for ministry setting.

**Procedure:**

The course alternates between six zoom class sessions and the intervening periods for individual exploration and online Canvas engagement by students of the readings, exercises, discussion, and interpretive reflection based on their respective settings. The zoom class sessions rely on brief lectures, group discussions, and one’s reading summary to explore the readings, instructor presentations, and guest presentations in order to explore creative ways to address social and religious changes. The intervening periods between zoom sessions rely on asynchronous engagement with the readings in discussion posts on the course website. A final paper provides an occasion to integrate work from the entire semester by reflecting on the national social and religious trends in relation to one’s distinctive ministry context and contextual needs.

All reading assignments must be completed in advance of the class session for which they are assigned, and a short reading summary produced that highlights the key relevant points from the readings as they relate to your ministry setting.

Each zoom session begins promptly at 6pm. In these gatherings, we will check in with each other regarding their setting and vocational issues. Then we will discuss the readings in some depth primarily related to their implications for the students’ ministry. A student’s reading summary should be used in class as well as submitted as an assignment prior to class. In exploring an innovative approach to the contemporary context, we may invite a guest to talk about their efforts, find creative examples online, or address a case study that shows a successful ministry adaptation. Following each class, you will be asked to write a reflection to a question about that session’s topic, reflecting on what you read and hear/saw in the class, and how you might understand these social patterns or dynamics within your religious framework and what it might imply for possible ministerial action strategies in your context.

In order to satisfy the 45 contact hours for this course, a majority of the contact hours will be conducted online, evenly divided in the periods between these 6 class sessions. The online assignment will be to post your reflection, and then to read those of your colleagues in the class, and substantively comment on at least one of these prior to the next meeting time. Additionally, the retreat participation counts as part of the contact hours.

**Required reading:**

The required texts will be the basis for our class discussions throughout the semester and for the reflection papers. All reading assignments must be completed prior to the zoom class.

**Grades:**

Throughout this course, grades are reported on an HP / P / LP basis, High Pass (95-100), Pass (83-94), Low Pass (70-82), and Fail (below 70)

 These grades mean:

HP Exceptional in most ways; such work completes all tasks, is creative, and original in content, and displays mastery of expression and content.

P Adequate in all ways; the task is complete, the content might have minor weaknesses, and expression is competent yet not consistently compelling or original and creative.

LP Inadequate in some significant way; does not address all the required tasks, shows weak or erroneous content, and written expression sometimes obstructs understanding or student’s thoughts.

*Class participation 25% of grade*

Attendance at and active participation in every class session is expected of all students. Exceptions are only allowed if advance permission has been granted by the instructor, and only for unavoidable absences. In all cases, failure to attend two class sessions automatically precludes successful completion of the course. The participation grade includes active familiarity with all readings and completion of online contact hours.

*Reading Summaries and online reflection – Key points and implications for your ministry 30% of grade*

*Final paper 45% of grade*

The final paper integrates the central insights and readings from the semester. This paper will describe an actual challenge to the student’s ministry context and then analyze this in relation to social and cultural patterns, organizational theory, and leadership strategies from the semester. Details for the final paper, including focus and format, will be provided at the 4th class session. Final papers must be sent by e-mail to the instructor in early Jan. 2025.

**Email Policy:** The instructor will use the official Hartford International University student email addresses for all communications. Please check your HIU email account regularly.

**Course extensions:**

Past experience has shown that timely completion of all assignments and the entire course is essential to successful completion of the overall D.Min. program. As a result, late writing assignments are strongly discouraged and course extensions are not permitted.

**Plagiarism warning:**

*Plagiarism and Academic Integrity*

Academic honesty and integrity are expected of all D.Min. students. Plagiarism exists when: a) the work

submitted was done, in whole or in part, by anyone other than the person submitting the work, b) parts

of the work, whether direct quotations, ideas, or data, are taken from another source without

acknowledgement, c) the whole work is copied from another source [especially a web-based source],

or d) significant portions of one’s own previous work used in another course.

**\*\* Any use of Artificial Intelligence (AI), ChatGPT, Grammarly, or other system without explicit reference of having used it constitutes plagiarism. This professor does not encourage the use of AI at all but must know how you used it, if you do use it.**

**Process Expectations:**

* Timely and regular attendance. If an emergency comes up (and they do), call or email me. The seminary’s policy for intensive courses is: Two absences in a semester constitutes a withdrawal from or failure of the course.
* Prepared and active participation in class presentations and discussions (in a sense, this course is a peer learning group with the instructor as coach). That is why your zoom camera must remain on.
* Commitment to dialogical engagement of one’s colleagues:
	+ Open sharing of one’s own perspectives and respectful probing of other’s perspectives
	+ Appreciative understanding of the other’s perspective/argument before offering suggestions for further consideration (the DMin project is a “constructive” effort; therefore, constructive suggestions are most helpful)
	+ Appreciative consideration of other’s suggestions.
* What is said in the group stays in the group!

**Appropriate Classroom etiquette and use of technology:**In order to respect the community within the classroom: 1) Mute all cell phones during class; 2) Keep your zoom camera on throughout the class. Please do not surf the web, do email, or engage in other activities during class time. Be present to each other.

**Inclusive Language:**

Hartford International University is committed to a policy of inclusion in its academic life and mission. All members of the community are expected to communicate in language that reflects the equality of genders, openness to diverse cultural, political, and theological perspectives, and sensitivity to one another’s images of God.

**Schedule:**

In the weeks prior to the first night of classes- please log into the Canvas course and introduce yourself (perhaps post a photo) and get familiar with the site. Please post your 2-3 page description of your ministry setting (used during the retreat) on our Canvas discussion board to share with your colleagues. In this description, describe your setting and then highlight current challenges to your efforts in this setting. Also read the first week’s book before our class on September 30th.

1) **The State of American Religion – An overview of the challenges and opportunities.**

*American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us* by Robert Putnam and David Campbell
**Read the Entire Book** I understand the book is huge and your time is short!  However, it is a good summary of the state of religion and religious research in the US even though it is 15 years old.  Read chapters 1, 3-6, 8, 9 and 15 carefully, skim the others - especially the vignettes chapters 2, 7, 10.

*Reading Summary – Key points of the reading and the implications from it for your ministry*

I would like a 3-page typed reading summary - 2 pages should cover the key points that struck you from this reading of the ways religious life is changing in the US, and then 1 page should reflect on the implications of these changes for your particular ministry setting.  You will turn in this 3-page summary but also use it in zoom class to inform your conversation.

**\*\* readings for sessions 2-6 might change throughout the semester \*\***

2) **Organizational/institutional change** - **New models of religious communities and the ways people are getting their spiritual needs met.**

Scott Thumma “The Shape of Things to Come: Megachurches, Emerging Churches and Other New Religious Structures Supporting an Individualized Spiritual Identity.” in *Faith in America: Changes, Challenges, New Directions*. Charles Lippy Pp. 185-206. <http://hirr.hartsem.edu/megachurch/organizationalchangechapter.doc>

Scott Thumma “What God Makes Free is Free Indeed: Nondenominational Church Identity and its Networks of Support” <http://hirr.hartsem.edu/bookshelf/thumma_article5.html>

Hartford Institute, Back to Normal? The Mixed Messages of Congregational Recovery Coming Out of the Pandemic August 2023
<https://www.covidreligionresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Epic-4-2.pdf>

Hartford Institute, Twenty Years of Congregational Change: The 2020 Faith Communities Today Overview 2021

<https://faithcommunitiestoday.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Faith-Communities-Today-2020-Summary-Report.pdf>

Wendy Cadge, Spiritual Care: The Everyday Work of Chaplains 2022 excerpts from the book.

Carey Nieuwhof, 5 Things Netflix Is Showing Church Leaders About the Future <https://careynieuwhof.com/5-things-netflix-is-showing-church-leaders-about-the-future/>

*Reading Summary – Key points of the reading and the implications from it for your ministry*

3) **Generational & Individual change Individualism & Consuming Faith – an individualist approach to community and religiosity**

Daniel A. Cox, Sam Pressler, Disconnected: The Growing Class Divide in American Civic Life August 22, 2024

<https://www.americansurveycenter.org/research/disconnected-places-and-spaces/>

Christian Smith, with Patricia Snell. 2009 *Souls in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Young Adults*. Chapter 2: “The Cultural Worlds of Emerging Adults”, pp. 33-87. On Canvas website

Daniel A. Cox, Kelsey Eyre Hammond, Kyle Gray, Generation Z and the Transformation of American Adolescence: How Gen Z’s Formative Experiences Shape Its Politics, Priorities, and Future November 9, 2023
<https://www.americansurveycenter.org/research/generation-z-and-the-transformation-of-american-adolescence-how-gen-zs-formative-experiences-shape-its-politics-priorities-and-future/>

Tim Clydesdale & Kathleen Garces-Foley, (2019). *The Twenty-something Soul: Understanding the Religious and Secular Lives of American Young Adults*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. on Millennial and post-millennial generations and their spiritual quest. On Canvas website

*Reading Summary – Key points of the reading and the implications from it for your ministry*

4) **Religious Change in the Increasingly Secular Society** –**“SBNR,” Nones, and the challenge all religious worldviews are facing into the** s**ecular future.**

Elizabeth Drescher, (2016). *Choosing our Religion: The Spiritual Lives of America’s Nones*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. What chapters? chapter one pgs 16-52

Linda Mercadante, (2014). *Belief without borders: Inside the minds of the spiritual but not religious*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. What chapters?

Gallup In U.S., Childhood Churchgoing Habits Fade in Adulthood <https://news.gallup.com/poll/467354/childhood-churchgoing-habits-fade-adulthood.aspx>

Pew Nonaffiliates Study [http://www.pewforum.org/unaffiliated/nones-on-the-rise.aspx (Links to an external site.)](http://www.pewforum.org/unaffiliated/nones-on-the-rise.aspx)

Fetzer Institute, 2023 What Does Spirituality Mean to Us: A Study of Spirituality in the United States Since COVID. On Canvas website (The earlier study - Fetzer Institute, 2020 What Does Spirituality Mean to Us: A Study of Spirituality in the United States.) On Canvas website

Amy Lawton, Adah Anderson, and Wendy Cadge Nonreligious Chaplains and Spiritual Care. On Canvas website

*Reading Summary – Key points of the reading and the implications from it for your ministry*

5) **Societal/cultural change** **An Increasingly** **Diverse & Divided Population – Migration, religious pluralism, division, and the loss of a moral consensus.**

Robert Wuthnow, *America and the Challenges of Religious Diversity* Princeton University Press, 2005. Chapter 7 p.188-229 Chapter 8 p. 230-258 On Canvas website

Robert Wuthnow and Stephen Offutt. Transnational Religious Connections *Sociology of Religion* 2008 69:2 pp. 209-232 On Canvas website

Daniel A. Cox, Religious Diversity and Change in American Social Networks: How Our Social Connections Shape Religious Beliefs and BehaviorDecember 15, 2020 <https://www.americansurveycenter.org/research/religious-diversity-and-change-in-american-social-networks/>

Wendy Cadge, Sara Curran, B.Nadya Jaworsky and Peggy Levitt, The city as context: culture and scale in new immigrant destinations

<https://doi.org/10.4000/alhim.3640>

*Reading Summary – Key points of the reading and the implications from it for your ministry*

6) **Your Contextual Change, Challenges, and Creative Responses**

Daniel A. Cox, M. Anthony Mills, Ian R. Banks, Kelsey Eyre Hammond, Kyle Gray, America’s Crisis of Confidence: Rising Mistrust, Conspiracies, and Vaccine Hesitancy After COVID-19 September 28, 2023
<https://www.americansurveycenter.org/research/americas-crisis-of-confidence-rising-mistrust-conspiracies-and-vaccine-hesitancy-after-covid-19/>

Explore the websites of Faith and Leadership, Chaplaincy Innovation Lab, and other sites you found. Read and bring in examples of several case studies and examples of innovative congregational and chaplaincy approaches to the changing context of ministry.