



The Changing Face of the American Church Online DC 941Z

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Credit: *Three hours*

Introduction

Welcome to the course, **The Changing Face of the American Church**. Although I can't give you a personal welcome, as I might do in my on-campus course, I do want to welcome you warmly to this vital learning experience. I want this course to be a significant and vital part of your seminary education. You are one of many students taking advantage of the alternative delivery of high quality theological education through our EDEN distance learning enterprise. I am available when you need me because we aren't limited by office hours or distance. You can also access course materials and other pertinent information through the EDEN web site located on the seminary web page. I look forward to getting to know you better as we progress through the course materials. Anytime you have trouble or have a question about course content or course requirements, please use one of the communication means identified below to reach me. You can also stop by my office in Reid Hall. I pray God's wisdom as you expose yourself to the study of his Word.

Dr. Steve Lowe

Mission Statement

The mission of Erskine Theological Seminary is to educate persons for service in the Christian Church.

Course Description

This course examines the Church in post World War II American culture. Students evaluate the influences upon the churches in a rapidly changing environment.



Course Objectives

1. To identify specific areas of change that occurred in the American Protestant Church since World War II.
2. To identify some of the rapid changes in our culture impacting this Church.
3. To evaluate the extent to which current influences and cultural changes are affecting this Church.
4. To strategize about how best to help this Church cope with these cultural realities.
5. The course gives special attention to the study and evaluation of the impact of the identified ecclesial and cultural changes on the Evangelical wing of the American Protestant Church.
6. In addition, this course will contribute to the overall goals of the Doctor of Ministry program by providing opportunities for students to achieve program goals 2, 4, 5, 7, and 13.

Course Resources

REQUIRED COURSE MATERIALS

Students continue to be responsible for securing their own required textbooks. As a convenience, there is a bookstore on the seminary's home page. To access this site and its information, locate textbooks, and compare prices, go to <http://www.erskineseminary.org/bookstore.html>

The online bookstore will be a portal with links to Amazon, CBD, Barnes & Noble, the Erskine Campus Bookstore, and perhaps others. A limited number of copies of each textbook may be available from the Erskine Campus Bookstore, and copies may be ordered through that Bookstore.

On the Boundaries of American Evangelicalism: The postwar evangelical coalition, Jon R. Stone. Palgrave MacMillan, 1999.

The Changing Face of the Church: From American to Global, Thomas G. Nees. Beacon Hill, 1997.

Surveying the Religious Landscape: Trends in U.S. Beliefs, George Gallup, Jr. and Michael Lindsay. Morehouse Publishing, 2000.

Read these texts as indicated in the modules below. Not only are you expected to read these texts but you are expected to use them to complete the modules. I expect you to weave the content of the texts into your written assignments for each of the modules.

RECOMMENDED TEXTS

- *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, Fifth edition.



- A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations (Chicago Guides to Writing, Editing, and Publishing)

Course Assignments FAQs

1. **Submit all assignments via e-mail attachment (unless otherwise notified).**
2. Please use Microsoft Word when submitting assignments electronically.
3. All assignments should be clearly marked on the e-mail subject line with the student's last name and assignment number.

COURSE PLATFORM

Erskine Seminary is accredited by the Association of Theological Schools (ATS). According to the ATS Standard 10.3.4.3, "Institutions shall ensure that distance education programs provide appropriate opportunity for collaboration, personal development, interaction among peers within a community of learning, and supervised field or internship opportunities when appropriate to the degree program." It is with this stipulation that EDEN has implemented a web-based learning platform which will serve to provide a number of collaborative learning experiences. The learning platform is Moodle and according to their website, "Moodle is a course management system designed to help educators who want to create quality online courses . . . and create effective online learning communities." You will be provided with additional information concerning Moodle tutorials, site information, and the peer mentoring program. In order to meet the online discussion component of this course, you will need:

- A computer (or access to a computer)
- High-speed access to the Internet

Courses taken through Erskine's Distance Education Network are self-directed and self-paced within the parameters of the semester in which you enroll for the course. The time constraints of this course are self-imposed to a large degree. However, keep in mind that if you are working toward degree completion you may be bound by a time frame imposed by Seminary policy. Consult your catalog for specific time frames in your degree program. Some variation in time required to complete an assignment is to be expected due to a variety of factors, not the least of which is your own self-discipline.

Course Grading Scale and Criteria

Students always need to know what the professor expects of them in any course. This is especially true in distance learning courses.

The following grading scale, from the Seminary catalog is used to assign a numeric value to each completed assignment. All scores are weighted equally. Your final grade is the average of each grade received. A letter grade will be



computed on the basis of your average raw score using the following grade scale recently adopted by the Seminary faculty:

- A Level Work = Exemplary ability to differentiate constituent parts; assess and critique theories, thoughts, ideas, concepts, proposals, and relevant literature; and the ability to reason in a logical and compelling manner.
- B Level Work = Reflects above average grasp of the subject matter; displays a superior ability to use new knowledge in a creative manner; and can demonstrate an above average ability to discriminate among alternative viewpoints.
- C Level Work = Adequate but not exceptional ability to think cogently and clearly; sufficient ability to understand and comprehend subject matter; and a satisfactory ability to integrate and organize course concepts in a logical and coherent manner.

Grade Scale

A	95-100	B-	86-87
A-	93-94	C+	84-85
B+	91-92	C	80-83
B	88-90		

Course Requirements

The purpose and objectives of this course will be achieved through four learning modules. See the information listed below for more information.

Course Components

Interactive Component

In addition to the course requirements set out in the four modules below, each student is required to interact with the professor and other students via the **Going Deeper** Forum in each module. A different forum is located in each of the four modules in the online classroom for this course. One question is posed for each forum and each student is expected to give a thoughtful response to the question in light of course readings and lectures. Each student posts at least one response to another student’s post or a post from the professor. This means that each student makes at least two posts per module over the length of the course. Your posts receive assessment on the basis of depth of analysis, mastery of course concepts, and general cohesion (does it hold together and make sense?).

*Steps to upload your assignment:

1. Find the “Depot” discussion forum in the online classroom.



2. Click on that link and you will find assignment listed there.
3. Click on “Add a new discussion topic” and this will take you to the upload area
4. Type in your name and reaction paper title (i.e. Joe Smith’s paper) in the subject line.
5. Type a BRIEF explanation in the message section (i.e. Summary)
6. Click on the “browse” feature at the bottom of that paper and find your paper on your desktop.
7. Double-click on your document and select “post to forum” shown at the bottom of the screen.

Steps to download (or read) others’ assignment:

1. Find the “Depot” discussion forum in the online classroom.
2. Click on that link and you will find student postings listed there.
3. Click on the title of the student posting listed under Discussion.
4. Click on the Word document in that posting.
5. Select “open” to read the document instantly or “save” to save the document to your desktop folder.
6. Post your comments related to the paper by hitting “reply” on the discussion board. Enter your comments in message section. Hit “post to forum” when finished.

Module One: “The Changing Face of Religious Belief Since 1945”

Read *Surveying the Religious Landscape*. Using the questions scattered throughout the book taken from the Gallup Polls or using the questions found at [Polling Report.Com](http://Polling.Report.Com) construct a 10 to 15 item religious opinion poll. Your survey instrument should conform to accepted standards in the field of survey research. Distribute the poll to the members of your congregation (or a random or convenience sample) and tabulate the percentage results. Consult the addendum to this syllabus entitled “Survey Basics” before you construct your survey instrument. Based upon the results of your survey, write a 4-6 page analysis of your findings compared to the results of surveys reported in *Surveying the Religious Landscape*. How does your congregation compare to the national sample? What surprises did you find? What didn’t surprise you? What shocked you? Upload your paper to the online class. Your paper should give evidence of the fact that you have read the *Landscape* text and are familiar with the general overview it provides of the religious attitudes and beliefs of Americans. My evaluation is based on the (1) the quality of your survey instrument, (2) the sophistication of your data analysis, and (3) the breadth of your ability to compare and contrast your local results with the national results.

You should complete all work for Module One by the end of the first month of the semester.



Due: last day of first month of the course.

Module Two: “The Changing Ethnic Face of the Church Since 1945”

Read and analyze *The Changing Face of the Church: From American to Global*. Consider this book a case study on the Church of the Nazarene denomination and how it is attempting to change in light of the ethnic diversity of the American culture. You should conduct independent research on two levels. First, using some of the material set out in this text and finding additional information on your own, write a one to two page summary of the changing ethnic makeup of the United States. Be sure to provide citations for all data. Present your findings in a series of bulleted observations and facts. Second, do a regional ethnic survey that covers the county in which your church resides. Find out what ethnicities are represented and what percentage of the total population of that region they represent. After you have collected your data, write a 4-6 page critical analysis of your finding. Be sure to compare your local county data to the national data. Also compare the results you obtained with the results presented in the *Changing Face* text. Upload your work to the online classroom in the space provided in the Module Two area. Also send me an email attachment of the same.

You should complete all work for Module Two by the end of the second month of the semester.

Module Three: “The Changing Face of the American Evangelical Church Since 1945”

Read *On the Boundaries of American Evangelicalism: The Postwar Evangelical Coalition*. After you have finished reading, select one time period (Chapter Three = 1880-1930; Chapter Four = 1940-1960 and New Evangelicalism; Chapter Five = 1940-1965 and Checking the Drift Toward Liberalism; and Chapter Six = 1965-1990) to focus upon. Taking one of these chapters as your jumping off point, write an evaluation of the relationship between the American cultural landscape during that time period and the changes that took place in Evangelicalism. What connections or influences can you identify that you think may have shaped the direction Evangelicalism took during that time period. Your analysis should be 4-6 pages in length and conform to Turabian style. Upload your analysis to the Module Three section of the course.

You should complete all work for Module Three by the end of the third month of the semester.

Module Four: “The Future Face of the Evangelical Church to 2045.”

Using the chart found on page 36 in *On the Boundaries of American Evangelicalism*, entitled “Webber’s Fourteen Categories of Protestant



Evangelicalism,” select one of the fourteen categories and write an 4-5 page analytical paper. In the paper you will want to identify the changes that have taken place in this particular sector of American Evangelicalism since World War II. Identify those social, cultural, theological, demographic, numerical, and other forces that shaped the changes that have taken place. Explain what we can learn from the experience of this particular sector and what you see on the horizon for this group. As before, upload your assignment to the Module Four section of the online classroom set aside for it.

You should complete all work for Module Four by the end of the fourth month of the semester.

Survey Basics

- Adapt your survey to the people who will be participating in your study. Consider the unique characteristics of the people you are asking to complete your survey.
- Ask only questions you need answers to. That is, have a clear purpose in mind as you begin to construct your survey instrument.
- Always begin your survey with a few non-threatening questions because introductory questions that are threatening or dull may reduce survey completion rates.
- Do not put important items at the end of the survey.
- Number each item on the survey instrument.
- Have a clear and understandable rating system. Most survey instruments use a Likert scale from 1 to 4 with a descriptor assigned to each number. For instance: 1 = strongly agree; 2 = agree; 3 = disagree; 4 = strongly disagree. Having numerical ratings allows you to conduct basic statistical analyses to your obtained data.
- Arrange response options vertically: Yes___ No___
Rather than horizontally: Yes___ No___
- Give clear directions for completing the survey instrument.
- If questions appear on both sides of a page, type the word “over” on the bottom of the front side of that page.
- Avoid overcrowding items on a page because it is easier for respondents to mark answers in the wrong place.
- Avoid using the words “questionnaire,” “survey,” or “checklist” on your instrument. Use of these words has been shown to induce respondents either to not respond or fail to complete the survey.
- Question items should communicate something specific and address only one issue or topic. Avoid the use of “and” because it often signals a compound question (Example: “Do you like dogs and cats?” A respondent may like dogs but not cats and would find answering this question difficult if not impossible).
- Avoid the use of abbreviations and jargon.



- It is always helpful to pretest your survey instrument on a population similar to those who will be taking the final version. Your pretest can even be one other person who takes the survey and provides feedback about questions and layout.
- Carefully and meticulously edit your survey items so that you have written each item to elicit the information you seek and nothing else.
- Sampling methods should be as simple as possible for a project of this nature. Various forms of probability sampling are beyond the scope of this limited project. Nonprobability techniques are appropriate with convenience sampling the most ideal. A convenience sample makes no pretense at being representative of a whole population (your church, for instance). This approach simply takes respondents, as they happen to show up. You cannot control for bias (i.e., one gender represented more than another or one age group more than another) but at least you have a sample of opinion. One cannot extrapolate or extend the implications of the results to an entire population but one can infer certain tendencies and indications.
- Once your data are collected, use very simple descriptive statistics in order to analyze your results. By using numerical rating options (1= strongly agree) you assign a numerical value to each response category. This permits you to use simple mathematical procedures on your obtained data in order to draw conclusions about group averages and tendencies (descriptive statistics). Statistics of this type describe and analyze data from which generalizations or inferences to the population (your church) are drawn. Typically all you will need for our purposes are the mean (arithmetic average), the median (the middle score in an array of scores), and the mode (the most frequently occurring score).
- The simplest way of representing research findings is through frequency distributions (tables and graphs) of raw data or percentages. If you have a 4-point Likert scale (as shown above) you will have raw numerical data for each response category (strongly agree = 14; agree = 10; disagree = 4; strongly disagree = 8). Visually you can draw inferences based upon the raw numbers but if we turn the raw numbers into percentages, it becomes easier to display and communicate the data. In the above case, we have a total of 36 respondents to a specific question. To compute percentages for each response category one would simply divide 36 into each raw number (14 divided by 36 = 38%). From this example we can readily see that 38% strongly agreed and 27% agreed with the item statement compared to 11% and 22% who disagreed or strongly disagreed. We could then accurately state that 65% of respondents to survey item number x agreed or strongly agreed with the statement represented in item number x. When compared to the 33% who disagreed or strongly disagreed, one can readily observe and conclude that the vast majority of respondents to this question were in agreement with the item statement. It must be remembered that the total number of respondents changes from one question or survey item to the next so that the total number of respondents will be different for each item or question on the survey instrument



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Seminary Policies

http://seminary.erskine.edu/content_policies/SeminaryPoliciesforETSStudents.pdf