Emergent/Emerging Christianity

Course description
Rather than giving a ‘thick description’ of the ecclesial phenomenon of Emergent Christianity, this class will engage with the most important theological issues that grab the attention of those participating in the emergent conversation. Most of the attention will be given to the more theologically sophisticated of the emergent thinkers, rather than to the more popular writers, pastors, activists.

Although there are two directing philosophical influences that have shaped the conversation, respectively Anglo-American postmodernity and continental philosophy, I will be concentrating more on the former.

My position will be that of a ‘sympathetic critic’. An atmosphere of friendly and generous, yet convictional and serious debate will be promoted. This will be a hands-on approach, based on actual engagement, rather than caricature.

Course objectives
The student will have to become familiar with the formation and framing of a number of important theological issues in an emergent key. She will also be able to understand the rationale for the emergent reformulation of Christianity and critically relate to it.

Evaluation
- Final research paper: 3000 words; Topic must be suggested by the student and approved by the instructor. Weight: 60%
  - May graduates – papers due April 27th midnight.
  - All other students – papers due May 7th, 4:00 p.m.
- Reading reports: The student must read the assigned texts prior to each class and submit the report at the end of semester. The report should simply specify the percentage of the reading done. Weight: 40%. Due together with research papers.
- All of the above are necessary requirements: each must be completed in order to obtain a grade.

Additional notes

1 The final version of the syllabus will be made available to students on the first day of class. All final changes will be minor matters of detail.
- The use of your computer for anything other than taking notes (such as browsing the net, playing games, chatting, Facebook, Twitter) is not acceptable.

**Course outline**

Week 1/ Feb 3  
*Introduction to the Conversation*  
Belcher, 7-71  
Jones

Week 2/ Feb 10  
*Digging Postmodern culture*  
J. K. A. Smith

Week 3/ Feb 17  
*Speaking about God*  
Rollins  
Franke 1-43

Week 4/ Feb 24  
*Speaking of God*  
Grenz and Franke 3-57  
Belcher 71-91

Week 5/ Mar 2  
*The Missional God*  
Franke 43-73  
Grenz and Franke 169-203

Week 6/ Mar 9  
*Scripture*  
Franke 73-139  
Grenz and Franke 57-93

Week 7/ Mar 16  
*The Church*  
Grenz and Franke 93-130; 203-239  
Belcher 91-141

Week 8/ Mar 23  
*Authority, Preaching, Governance excerpt* from Doug Pagitt  
Belcher 141-161

Week 9/ Mar 30
Culture
Grenz and Franke 130-169
Belcher 181-209

Week 10/ Apr 13
Pluralism and Universalism
excerpt from Gregory MacDonald The Evangelical Universalist
excerpt from Rob Bell’s Love Wins

Week 11/ Apr 20
What is Evangelicalism?
Olson

Week 12/ Apr 27
Conclusion

Week 13/ May 4
Final papers week

Required reading
Books
- Stanley Grenz and John Franke, Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context (WJK, 2001)
- Jim Belcher, Deep Church (IVP, 2009)

Articles/chapters (a Reader will be provided)
- excerpt from Doug Pagitt, Preaching Re-imagined: The Role of the Sermon in Communities of Faith
- excerpt from Peter Rollins, How (Not) to Speak of God
- Roger Olson, Reformed and Always Reforming: The Postconservative Approach to Evangelical Theology
- excerpt Gregory MacDonald, The Evangelical Universalist
- excerpt from James K. A. Smith, Who’s Afraid of Postmodernism?
- Excerpt from Tony Jones, The Church is Flat: The Relational Ecclesiology of the Emerging Church Movement (JoPa Productions,

Bibliography


____, *Insurrection: To Believe is Human, to Doubt, Divine*.


