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. To this end students will be required to both attend an emergent church service, and participate at a Boston Emergent cohort meeting.

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**: 40%
- **Anonymous worshipper report**: Each student must attend at least one service at an emergent church in the vicinity. The student will write a report consisting of a theological reflection on his or her experience. **Weight**: 15%
- **Boston emergent cohort report**: Each student must attend a meeting of the Boston emergent cohort, participate in the conversation and write a report about the experience, giving details about his or her contribution to the debate. **Weight**: 15%. [http://bostoncohort.blogspot.com/](http://bostoncohort.blogspot.com/)
- **Reading reports and discussion starters**: The student must read the assigned texts prior to each class and submit the report at the beginning of the class. The report must contain at least 2 ‘discussion starters’ – two issues which the student thinks are important to be further discussed, with an attending explanation. **Weight**: 30%
- **All of the above are necessary requirements**: each must be completed in order to obtain a grade.
Course outline

Lecture 1
*Introduction to the Conversation*
Belcher, 7-71
Jones

Lecture 2
*Speaking about God*
Rollins
Grenz and Franke 3-57
Franke 1-43
Belcher 71-91

Lecture 3
*The Missional God*
Franke 43-73
Grenz and Franke 169-203

Lecture 4
*Scripture*
Franke 73-139
Grenz and Franke 57-93

Lecture 5
*The Church*
Grenz and Franke 93-130; 203-239
Belcher 91-141

Lecture 6
*Authority, Preaching, Governance*
excerpt from Doug Pagitt
Belcher 141-161

Lecture 7
*Culture*
Grenz and Franke 130-169
Belcher 181-209

Lecture 8
*Pluralism*
excerpt from Gregory MacDonald *The Evangelical Universalist*

Lecture 9
*What is Evangelicalism?*
Conclusion

Office hours
See on door.

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

Bibliography


