

## **Social Context (IPS 532-002)**

Class number: 7532

Water Tower Campus

Instructor: *Clinton Stockwell, MUPP, PhD*

Monday, 8:45a.m. – 11:15a.m.

### **Course Description:**

The Christian story suggests that God cared enough about the human condition that God self dwelt in human flesh and contexts. As such in an attempt to be faithful to living out the gospel and the ministry of the Good News, we have to take into account the times and places that we find ourselves called to minister in and through. We will pay close attention to the material conditions that we find ourselves in and the communities that we are located in to minister. We will develop both theory and skills for understanding the context of ministry in the fullest sense of the word. This will include the political, cultural, economic and religious realms of the world. We cannot be effective if we do not have a better understanding of the context in which we are called to serve. Understanding the context is however not a substitute for action itself, rather it is informed ministry that reflects upon its praxis in the light of the prophetic proclamation of the Good News. As such, we will situate all analysis within the context of practical ministry: How might our analysis serve us in our ministry on behalf of Spirituality and Justice? Our praxis and analysis will be rooted in the Gospel and our work will be informed by theological reflection. It is not just what we understand the world to be, but rather what does our faith tradition say about this world and these conditions? How do we locate our own praxis within the larger project of faith in the world? We will seek to work out these questions through our readings, class discussion, class assignments and the semester long collective project that will put all these skills and theory at work in the real world.

### **Course Objectives:**

1. *To explore the significance and relationships between overlapping social contexts-* that influence our lives (from Global to Local).
2. *To gain skills and experience in analyzing a local context--* giving particular attention to a local context's history, tradition, demographics, trends, needs, issues and alternative visions.
3. *To develop a working perspective on society,* including an understanding of the world "as it is" (analysis) to the world "as it should be" (vision/imagination).
4. *To develop a Community Plan or Strategy* that an agent (student or community organization) could act upon in some concrete or specific way (s). This plan or strategy would of necessity be relevant to an accurate analysis of the real needs and possible visions of a specific community or neighborhood.

### **Assignments:**

1. *The Readings* in the course were selected to give us a working vocabulary, key concepts, and perspective with regard to analyzing the multi-layered contexts that overlap our lives (global, national, regional (state, county, metro, city), neighborhood locality). Students will be assigned responsibility for aspects of each reading assignment for discussion purposes.
2. *Oral Presentations.* Each of the three oral presentations build on each other. The goal is that students will practice social analysis of a particular context beginning with a description of the community chosen; a listing of organizations that are involved in shaping the future of the community; and unresolved issues that are either being addressed or should be addressed by the community.
3. *Final written Paper,* is a Strategy Paper. Given what we know about a community (history, demographics, trends, built environment, civic culture), what are the critical issue(s) facing the community and its residents, and what strategy might best address that/those critical issue(s)?

## Grading:

- Readings and Discussions, 30%
- Community Analysis Presentations (3) 30%
  - Description (History, demographics, built environment)
  - Organizations (Power Analysis)
  - Issues (single or overlapping)
- Final Paper. Strategy Paper 30%
- Attendance and Participation 10%/ 100% Total

## Required Readings: (Note, I have selected several books of small to modest length, rather than longer ones).

1. **Globalizing Civil Society (Open Media Pamphlet Series, 4) (Paperback)** by [David Korten](#). Paperback: 78 pages (July 1, 2003). ISBN-10: 1888363592 ISBN-13: 978-1888363593. (This book gives a critique of the global context, comparing the “money world” of multinational corporations to the perspective of the “living world” of environmental groups and indigenous peoples).
2. **Teachers as Cultural Workers**, Paulo Friere. Paperback: 240 pages. Westview Press; Expanded edition (January 9, 2006). ISBN-10: 0813343291 ISBN-13: 978-0813343297. (This book has some highly relevant if not crucial articles on “Reading the World/Reading the Word,” “Cultural Identity and Education” and “Concrete Context/Theoretical Context.”).
3. **The Coast of Chicago: Stories** by Stuart Dybek (Paperback - April 3, 2004). Paperback: 192 pages. ISBN-10: 0312424256 ISBN-13: 978-0312424251. (Note, I struggled to pick out a Chicago book and decided on this one. Neighborhood contexts are all about stories, narratives, and relationships between people and the social/physical context of the city, and no one understands this better than Dybeck. Has great chapter on *Nighthawks* in this collection).
4. **Social Analysis: Linking Faith and Justice**, by Joe Henriot and Peter Holland. Orbis, 1983. 105 Pages. ISBN-10: 0883444623 ISBN-13: 978-0883444627. (Is the classic text on social analysis, expounding on what many know as the “hermeneutical circle.”)
5. **Living Faith: How Faith Inspires Social Justice** (Paperback), by [Curtiss Paul DeYoung](#). Publisher: Fortress Press; annotated edition (April 1, 2007). 186 Pages. ISBN-10: 0800638417 ISBN-13: 978-0800638412. (DeYoung describes the work of three persons noted for their prophetic critique of national contexts, including Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Malcolm X and The Burmese Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi).
6. **Rules for Radicals: A Pragmatic Primer for Realistic Radicals**, Saul David Alinsky. 224 pages Vintage (October 23, 1989). ISBN-10: 0679721134 ISBN-13: 978-0679721130. (Alinsky got his start in Chicago, and understandings of power and self-interest, grassroots democratic organizing are key. Language of “world as it is” and “should be” were picked up on by the Obamas. Community Organizing as a profession got a nice plug, ironically, from the Republican Presidential hopefuls last fall).

## Itinerary: (A combination of field trips, discussions, and guest presentations)

- August 24. Introductions . The Global Context
  - Video, End of Suburbia.
  - Korten, *Globalizing Civil Society*. Living World versus Money World.
- August 31. Concepts/ discussions, from Friere, *Teachers as Cultural Workers*

Video. Place Matters (Place Contexts)  
Basic Vocabulary  
Worldviews/Perspectives  
Read, Friere, *Teachers as Cultural Workers* (First Half)

September 7. No Class. Labor Day.

September 14. Neighborhood Visit – One- Cabrini Green- Guest Leader, Cynthia Stewart  
Read, *Teachers as Cultural Workers* (Second Half).

September 21. Neighborhood Visit- Two- Pilsen  
Read, Dybeck, *The Coast of Chicago*, pp. 1-81.

September 28. Neighborhood Analysis- Narratives/Stories. Uptown.  
Read, Dybeck, *The Coast of Chicago*, Nighthawks, pp. 82-118  
Assignment One: Presentation. Your Neighborhood Description

October 5. Organization Visit- One (TBA)- Advocacy- Immigration Rights  
Read, Henriot and Holland, *Social Analysis: Linking Faith and Social Justice*.  
(first half of book)  
Hermeneutical Circle/ Pastoral Circle  
Social Ministry Taxonomy

October 12. Organization Visit- Two (TBA)- Political Action

October 19. Assignment Two: Organizational Analysis/ Power Analysis  
(What Organizations are at work in your community?  
Who has the decision making power?).  
Read, Henriot and Holland, *Social Analysis* (Second Half)

October 26. Mid Term Writing/Discussion/Reflection.  
Integrating Readings with Community Explorations.

November 2. Issue related visit one- Homelessness- A Religious Problem?  
Pacific Garden Mission  
Read, De Young, *Living Faith*, Chs. 1-4 (Bonhoeffer)

November 9. Issue Related Visit two- Homelessness, a Race Problem?  
Coalition to End Homelessness, Steve Saunders  
Read, De Young, *Living Faith*, Chs. 5-6 (Malcolm X)

November 16. Issue Analysis- Homelessness, an Economic and Political Problem?  
Interfaith Council for the Homeless  
Read, DeYoung, *Living Faith*, Chs. 7-9 (Aung San Suu Kyi)  
Assignment Three. Issue Analysis of Your Community

November 23. Intervention Strategy- One- Community Organization,  
Read, Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals*

November 30. Intervention Strategy – Two- Community Development,  
*Assets Based Community Development* (ABCD)

December 7. Final Papers- Your Strategy (strategic vision) for your designated community or  
community issue.

## Bibliography:

### Supplemental Readings:

(Other options for those who have read two of the books above).

1. **The Great Turning: From Empire to Earth Community** by David C. Korten. Kumerian Press, 2006. (Note: This is a GREAT book, but since it is rather long, I decided against it, but heartily recommend it. We will discuss and contrast “earth community” and “empire” in the course and will refer to at least one chapter in this book regardless).
2. Philip Bess, **Till We have Built Jerusalem: Architecture, Urbanism and the Sacred**. Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 2006. (I really like this book, but it is very “classical” in perspective, with treatments of Aristotle, Thomas, but has great analysis of the New Urbanism as a movement, and urban design, which will be discussed in the class. This could be read as an option if the student has read two or more of the assigned texts. Since it is so different from Friere, Korten, Alinsky, Holland, it seemed better for another class than this one on social context).
3. There are many other Freire books, including **Pedagogy of the Oppressed**, though the essays and themes in the assigned book, **Teachers as Cultural Workers**, are more accessible and I believe more germane to the course theme. But, anyone interested in social justice should read *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* some time in their career preparation.