

TM721 Churchonomics: The Gospel in a Market-shaped Church. (8 units) Jason Clark

DESCRIPTION:

This course provides students with an exploration of the nature of consumerism and the market, of how these realities shape human identity and relationships, and how close or far they are from the nature of Christian conversion and formation. With this understanding we then examine current forms of church and in particular emerging church, to assess how far they are captive to these forces, or able to resist them. Lastly in light of this we consider what alternatives might be possible for our church and ministries in terms of structure, leadership, evangelism and discipleship.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

- Understand how people are shaped and formed by Consumerism and the Market, and how this helps or hinders Christian formation
- Understand how far modern and emerging churches are captive to the forces of Consumerism and the Market
- Produce alternative practical strategies for church structure, leadership development, and spiritual formation that can better respond to these forces

RELEVANCE FOR MINISTRY:

Many Christian leaders in churches, Christian organizations and various mission communities recognize that the world is rapidly becoming interconnected economically, technologically, culturally and politically. Increasingly in our consumer-oriented market-based society, people often regard churches of all stripes as a matter of personal preference and convenience, and are forming new ecclesiologies around these changes, uncritically.

At the same time, leaders are often culturally aware, yet they lack any confidence and grounding in Scripture, church history and theology. Consequently, they find themselves struggling to adapt in order to fruitfully and effectively proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ in this context. This course is designed to attend to these problems and challenges.

COURSE FORMAT:

This one week intensive course will feature dialogical lectures, personal and small group reflection, guest presentations, various media (web – research, PowerPoint presentations, videos), and the practice of interpretive skills. Students will continue to implement research and participate in Moodle activities throughout the year, and engagement with other social media tools, such as Twitter.

REQUIRED READING:

- Cavanaugh, William T. *Being Consumed : Economics and Christian Desire*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2008.
- Frost, Michael, and Alan Hirsch. *The Shaping of Things to Come : Innovation and Mission for the 21st-Century Church*. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003.
- Gibbs, Eddie, and Ryan K. Bolger. *Emerging Churches : Creating Christian Community in Postmodern Cultures*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2005.
- Hsu, Albert Y. *The Suburban Christian : Finding Spiritual Vitality in the Land of Plenty*. Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Books/InterVarsity Press, 2006.
- Long, D. Stephen. *Divine Economy : Theology and the Market Radical Orthodoxy Series*. London ; New York: Routledge, 2000.
- Miller, Vincent Jude. *Consuming Religion : Christian Faith and Practice in a Consumer Culture*. New York: Continuum, 2003.
- Polanyi, Karl. *The Great Transformation : The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time*. 2nd Beacon Paperback ed. ed. Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2001.
- Weber, Max, and Talcott Parsons. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Mineola, N.Y.: Dover Publications, 2003.

ASSIGNMENTS:

Pre-Seminar

- * 3,000 pages (8 units) reading all books above.
- * A reading log will be due the first day of class.

Post-seminar

- Write a 7,500 word academic paper that demonstrates:
 1. A theological description of the affects of consumerism and the Market on identity
 2. An assessment of how effective modern and emerging ecclesiologies are countering these Consumer and

Market forces

3. A proposal of strategies for the students own ministry context in light of this, with regards to church structures, leadership and spiritual formation