Ecclesiology, Organizational Theory, and Collective Action
Dustin D. Benac
dustin.benac@duke.edu ~ 210.573.6863

OVERVIEW
This course considers the relationship between ecclesiology, organizational theory, and collective action. The first part introduces key strands of organizational theory. The second part considers the patterns of thought and practice that may organize theological reflection about social life by examining four approaches to ecclesiology. When considered in relation to three contemporary cases, organizational theory and theology offer complementary perspectives to understand and constructively engage the relationship between individual and collective action.

COURSE GOALS
Students will read selected primary and secondary sources. Students will be able to:
1. Identify the distinguishing features of four strands of organizational theory: neo-institutional theory, network theory, organizational ecology, and evolutionary approaches.
2. Identify the distinguishing features of Catholic, Reformed & Neo-Orthodox, Evangelical, and Missional-Church accounts of the conditions that organize religious thought and practice.
3. Examine three contemporary cases by using organizational theory and theology to consider the relationship between individual and collective action.

COURSE CALENDAR
Week 1: Introductions

Week 2: Guiding Themes

Week 3: Organizational Theory I: Neo-Institutional Theory

Week 4: Organizational Theory II: Network Theory
- Reading: Selections from Ferguson, The Square and the Tower: Networks, Hierarchies and the Struggle for Global Power (Great Britain: Penguin Random House, 2017);

Week 5: Organizational Theory III: Organizational Ecology

Week 6: Organizational Theory IV: Evolutionary Approaches
Week 7: Class Presentations
• Reading: No reading—prepare for presentations.

Week 8: Ecclesiology I: Catholicism
• Reading: Selections from Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium (The Joy of the Gospel)* (2013);

Week 9: Ecclesiology II: Reformed & Neo-Orthodox
• Reading: Selections from Kuyper, *Rooted & Grounded: The Church as Organism and Institution*, (Grand Rapids: Christian’s Library Press, 2013);
• Selections from Barth, “The True Church,” in *Church Dogmatics* (New York: Scribner’s Sons, 1956).

Week 10: Ecclesiology III: Evangelicalism
• Reading: Balmer, “Defining American Evangelicalism,” in *Evangelicalism in America* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2016);

Week 11: Ecclesiology IV: Missional-Church Movements
• Reading: Selections from Rice and Foster, *To Alter Your World* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2017);

Week 12: Case Study I: First Female Senior Pastor at Riverside Church in New York City
• Readings: Selections from Peter Paris et al., *The History of Riverside Church in the City of New York* (New York: New York University Press, 2004);

Week 13: Case Study II: World Vision International

Week 14: Case Study III: Muslim Call to Prayer at Duke University Chapel
• Calamur, “After Saying Yes, Duke Nixes Muslim Call to Prayer from Chapel Bell Tower,” *NPR*, January 15, 2015;
• Horwitz, “Muslim call to prayer sounds at Duke University, but not from the chapel tower,” *Washington Post*, January 16, 2015.

Week 15: Ecclesiology, Organizational Theory, and Collective Action
• Reading: No reading—prepare final case study.
ASSIGNMENTS & GRADING

Overview:
- Classroom engagement (e.g. in-class writing, class discussions): 15%
- Organizational Foundations Presentation: 25%
- Religious Tradition Essay: 25%
- Final Case Study: 35%
- Total: 100%

Assignments:

Organizational Foundations Presentation: In assigned groups, you will give a fifteen-minute presentation that compares and contrasts two strands of organizational theory. This presentation should: identify the animating question(s) of each strand; clarify key terminology (e.g. ‘nodes’, ‘networks’, ‘fields’); and briefly note how each may inform the study of religion.

Ecclesial Reflection Essay: Write a five-page (double spaced) response to the following questions: For one of the approaches to ecclesiology we examined, what are the distinguishing markers of the “church”? What form(s) of religious thought and practice organize the priority and character of the church’s social form and function?

Final Case Study: You will undertake an in-depth examination of one of the cases that we explored. This ten-page (double spaced) case statement should include three main parts: relevant background information for your case; a description of the organizational setting using at least one strand of organizational theory; a discussion of the religious values and practices that enable and constrain action (in your case) based on your engagement with at least one approach to ecclesiology. Your final case study may incorporate previous work from your organizational foundations presentation and ecclesial reflection essay, but this material should be revised to reflect the animating concerns of your case. If you would like to explore a case beyond the three introduced in class, you must get instructor permission before the midpoint of the semester.