

MISSION IN MARGINAL PLACES: THEOLOGICAL, PRACTICAL AND ETHNOGRAPHIC EXPLORATIONS

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In partnership with Urban Life, Bristol Baptist College is introducing four new modules at level 7 which will open up a new pathway for those who wish to pursue an in-depth study of the theology and practices of mission in relation to urban and marginalised contexts.

- Theology and Mission in Contemporary Urban Contexts
- Practical Theology and Ethnography
- Theological Perspectives on Place and Power
- Christian Responses to Marginalisation, Social Exclusion and Deep-Rooted Deprivation

The modules will be of interest to those who are committed to living out a practical and radical Christian response in communities and places that are marked by deprivation and social marginalisation of various kinds. They draw on a combination of key subjects to ensure that theological rigour connects with the lived experience of those in marginal places. They explore the complex and fluid cultures and situations which describe contemporary urban life and seek to develop practical Christian responses in terms of practices and spiritualities which nurture Christian involvement in demanding and difficult environments.

In addition to the four new modules on offer there is also a further option to tailor your dissertation in order to pursue in-depth research on a particular aspect of your own context or to explore a specific social context or location from a theological or missiological perspective. You may draw on practical theological and ethnographic approaches to develop deeper insights into your own context and the challenges faced by its communities and explore questions about the kinds of Christian convictions and practices that enable the Christian community to open up creative, redemptive and prophetic modes of engagement.

PRACTICAL THEOLOGY AND ETHNOGRAPHY

Dates: This module will be delivered in 2018-19 academic year.

Recent developments in the relationship between practical theology and ethnography have opened up important and fascinating opportunities for a deeper theological exploration of the cultures and spiritualities of particular local contexts and the development of missional practices which enable the Christian community to engage more deeply with the complexities of particular situations.



Drawing on these developments, this module will explore key theories, methods and practices which are fundamental for any Christian community that seeks to practice embodied approaches to mission based on theological ideas such as 'incarnation' and 'neighbouring'. This includes an emphasis on training in and practical outworking of ethnographic approaches and techniques in relation to mission. Ideas about ethnography as Christian theology and spirituality will be used to develop ways of 'seeing': that is seeing the ways in which power is embodied in the particular social, cultural and spatial arrangements of a context; and seeing one's 'self' in relation to those arrangements.

The module will be of interest to students who regard themselves as 'practitioners' and want to develop a more theologically rigorous approach to the challenges of their own particular place. It will also be of interest to those who are inspired by 'incarnational' or even 'non-violent' approaches to mission and realise that this calls for tools which will enable them to better explore a variety of social-cultural contexts.

CHRISTIAN RESPONSES TO MARGINALISATION, SOCIAL EXCLUSION AND DEEP-ROOTED DEPRIVATION

Dates: This module will be delivered in 2018-19 academic year.

The UK is the world's sixth largest economy, and yet one in five people live below the official poverty line; 3.7 million children were living in poverty in 2014, a figure predicted to rise to 4.3 million by 2020. These headlines point to less visible drivers which exclude and marginalise the less well-off and often cause them to slip outside of the normal experience of mainstream society.



Motivated by the strong traditions within the Christian community of a 'bias to the poor', this module explores contemporary experiences of poverty in the UK and, by drawing on social scientific as well as theological resources, it seeks a deeper understanding of the social, spatial, political or spiritual arrangements that cause and sustain

them. Consideration will then be given to the critical questions that these findings pose in relation to the church's ecclesiology and missiology – including questions such as whether the current mainstream missional practices of the church offer a prophetic challenge to underlying drivers of marginalisation; how Christian responses avoid becoming incorporated into the wider movements of neoliberalism; whether the welfare state should be taken over by the church; and how responses can empower (rather than disempower) the poor?

Students will engage with a number of case studies through which they will gain understanding of how people from a variety of contexts experience groups such as the following: long-term residents of an 'outer city' estate; migrants and asylum seekers; and those who have precarious lifestyles through combinations of homelessness and mental ill-health. They will consider how practical-theological approaches might open up new, creative and imaginative approaches in these situations. The module will include an in-depth study of one such situation along with a seminar style presentation to the rest of the group.

THEOLOGY AND MISSION IN CONTEMPORARY URBAN CONTEXTS

Dates: 11-12 Dec 2017 and 05-06 Feb 2018. This module will be delivered in Bristol.

As home to more than half the world's population, cities play a fundamental role in shaping cultures on a global scale. Their complex, interconnected and ever-changing modes of life have profound practical effects across society.

With a particular emphasis on British cities, this module will draw on sources from urban theology and urban studies to investigate the development of cities and their contemporary characteristics. The module offers the opportunity to look in more detail at particular urban situations (such as outer-city estates, immigrant communities, suburbs, city centres and gentrifying urban spaces)



and how urban change consisting of gentrification, political austerity and post-welfarism is leading to spatial and social segregation. Connected to this we will explore how the context of globalisation and neoliberal governance is linked to both spatial splintering and socio-economic inequality in the city.

These changes are having a profound influence on the experience of living in the city and raise questions about the challenges they present to both theological engagements with urban contexts as well as practical Christian responses to the issues raised.

We will draw on key thinkers and practitioners in urban theology and mission to investigate how the Christian community has been responding to the multiple challenges raised by the rapid development of cities and we will critically review a range of missional responses to those challenges. Students will have the opportunity to study a specific urban context and to investigate how a contemporary model of urban mission might suggest a fresh approach to the challenges raised there.

THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON PLACE AND POWER

Dates: 16-17 April and 14-15 May 2018. The module will be delivered in Birmingham

Place and *space* are fundamental aspects of our daily experience and include the complex interaction of cultural, social, material and spiritual components. In human geography there has, since the 1970s, been a 'cultural turn' so that understandings



of place are seen as fundamental to conceptions of identity, otherness, difference and marginalisation. Surprisingly, these developments are not in general well referenced in the various disciplines of theology, Biblical studies and mission studies; an omission which needs urgently to be redressed, especially if the Christian community is to develop

a deeper understanding about how to engage in issues of deprivation and marginalisation in humanising, non-coercive ways.

This module will critically review the main theological approaches to *place*. It will show how reading of New Testament texts from the perspective of place can shed new light on the way that Biblical narratives portray Jesus' ministry and subsequently the mission of the church as engaging with the 'powers'. It will explore how Jesus' presence evoked a new kind of spatiality – one which might be conceived of as a 'redemptive place' – and how, by drawing on contemporary notions of place, the experience of the Kingdom of God might be thought in terms of 'third-space'.

Having established theological perspectives on place the module will explore how this enables us, through the application of ethnographic methods, to understand our own places more deeply and as a consequence how such understandings might critically shape our approach to mission. In particular we will investigate how the social construction of certain individuals and social groups as "out-of-place" has been seen to result in attempts to "purify" urban spaces via various forms of social exclusion and in the light of this we will use the lens of 'redemptive place' or 'the kingdom as third space' to critically review a number of contemporary approaches to mission.

COURSE STRUCTURE

The taught MA programme is comprised of 180 credits which are combined in the following way:

- Research and Resource Methods (compulsory module - 20 credits)
- Four modules on Mission and Marginality (total 80 credits)
- One module of your choice (20 credits)
- Dissertation: with the opportunity to carry out research in your own context or on a subject of your choice (60 credits)

- Flexible programme 1 year full-time, 2-4 years part-time with context learning options
- At least 40 credits must be taken each year

FEES

The fees presented here are for full-time MA fees in 2015-16 academic year and are given as a guideline only.

- EU students £5250 (Non-EU students £6345)
- Part-time students: £500 per 20 credits + annual validation fee
- Residential module (venue to be confirmed) will include an additional £150 accommodation and meal costs
- Non-award students: £200 per module

Membership of the College Library and use of the College online Virtual Learning Environment is available to all students registering on our awards. Our MA programme is taught in partnership with Trinity College, Bristol.

For an informal conversation about study contact Mike Pears, Director of Urban Life, mpears@urbanlife.org

