

MINISTERING IN THE TOWN AND COUNTRY CHURCH SYLLABUS

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

An overview of ministry in the town and country culture with an emphasis on understanding the varied types of town and country contexts and how each affects pastoral work and strategy. The town and country culture is experienced as well as studied during the class.

II. COURSE OBJECTIVES AND RATIONALE

In Spirit

1. To catch a glimpse of God's heart for town and country people and His perspective on the town and country church.
2. To feel a love and concern for the millions who live in town and country places in the United States and worldwide.
3. To see the town and country church as a vital part of the Body of Christ

In Understanding (Cognitive)

1. To see the spiritual needs in town and country environments.
2. To define "town and country" in both quantitative and qualitative ways.
3. To identify the main features of the agrarian and cosmopolitan mindsets.
4. To identify the types of town and country economies and their impact on the town and country church and its context.
5. To recognize the contextual factors that give a town and country church growth potential.
6. To grasp the effect of isolation on the web of relationships in which town and country people and churches exist.
7. To build a vocabulary for the town and country context.
8. To realize that ambition and success can be properly realized in the town and country context.

In Attitude (Affective)

1. To appreciate the unique strengths of the town and country church and its people.
2. To identify the town and country church as an acceptable and honorable calling.

In Skills (Behavioral)

1. To lead a church with both the agrarian and cosmopolitan mindsets to a unifying and fruitful cooperative ministry.
2. To successfully interact theologically and sociologically with members of the town and country culture.
3. To use available printed and electronic resources to better understand the town and country church.
4. To formulate ministry strategies for such things as preaching, teaching, evangelizing, vision casting, counseling, and administrating in ways sensitive to the town and country context.

III. COURSE TEXTBOOKS

A. Required

Klassen, Ron and John Koessler. *No Little Places: The Untapped Potential of the Small-Town Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996 (113 pages).

Flora, Cornelia Butler, Flora, Jan L., and Fey, Susan. *Rural Communities: Legacy and Change (2nd ed.)*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2004 (372 pages)

Urbanska, Wanda, and Levering, Frank. *Moving to a Small Town: A Guidebook for Moving from Urban to Rural America*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996 (327 pages)

Hughes, Kent and Barbara. *Liberating Ministry from the Success Syndrome*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1988 (204 pages)

B. Suggested and Supplementary Bibliography

A bibliography can be found at www.rhma.org.

IV. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. Reading Assignments

1. Read textbooks in the order listed above.
2. Read all textbooks in their entirety except *Moving to a Small Town*. Only pages 263-320 of *Moving to a Small Town* is required reading. (If reading this syllabus on-line, go to www.rhma.org/documents/TACT/Reading.pdf to read these pages.)

B. Written Assignments

All written assignments should be in 12 pt. Times New Roman font, double spaced, with one inch margins all round. In lieu of these specifications, the student may follow the standard policy of his or her seminary.

Pre-Course Assignments

- 1a. From your reading of *No Little Places*, provide a one-paragraph *application* summary for each chapter. I.e., your summary of each chapter should be filled with practical applications gleaned from the chapter that fit your particular town/country ministry context (the context in which you presently serve or the context you anticipate serving in someday). The first sentence for each paragraph should begin as follows: "As a small-town pastor (or whatever your role is/will be -- pastor's spouse, denominational leader, etc.), I must . . ."

OR

- 1b. In 2-3 pages, describe how *No Little Places* changed, or confirmed, your thinking about the town and country context as a valid and valuable place to minister.
2. From your reading of *Rural Communities: Legacy and Change*, write a 2-3 page paper answering the following questions (approximately one page for each question).
 - a. How might the concept of "legacy" affect the decision-making process of a town and country church?
 - b. Which one of the six "capitals" in Parts I & II seems most significant for the town and country church?
 - c. Of the changes described in Parts III & IV, which one seems likely to impact the town and country church, and why?
3. From your reading of *Moving to a Small Town*, write a 2-3 page paper explaining what, for you personally, would be the two least appealing things and the two most appealing things about small-town life.
4. As you read *Liberating Ministry from the Success Syndrome*, reflect on how this book applies to the town/country context. Write a minimum of three specific and concrete applications for each of the seven definitions for success given in chapters three through nine (21 applications total). Grading for this assignment will be heavily determined by how specific and concrete your applications are for the town/country context. The instructor is not looking for generic applications fitting for all ministry contexts.
 - An example of a specific and concrete application from Chapter 3: Faithfulness means my being careful to put in a full work day, even though my office is at home. No space for an office at church means I have no visible office hours, which means I am not as accountable to my parishioners as I might be in other circumstances. This makes it tempting to chronically get a late start to my day, or allow too many distractions from my children, the television, a magazine, a household chore, etc., which eats away time that I should devote to ministry.
 - An example of NOT being specific and concrete from Chapter 3: Faithfulness means I will read God's Word daily. (While it is true that this is a good example of faithfulness, it is not specific for the town/country context. Rather it is a generic application for all people in ministry and all ministry contexts.)

Post Course Assignment

1. Describe one changing trend in North American Town and Country culture, and strategize for ministry in a community where this trend is occurring. The paper should be between 13 and 17 pages in length and follow the formatting specifications above. The paper is due on the fourth Friday following the class, and should be submitted by email in Microsoft Word format if possible.

C. Quizzes and/or Exams

Due to the intensive-week format of this course, there are no quizzes or exams.

V. COURSE POLICIES**A. Weight Given to Course Requirements for Grading**

Class Participation	20%
<i>No Little Places</i> paper	10%
<i>Rural Communities</i> paper	10%
<i>Moving to a Small Town</i> paper	10%
<i>Liberating Ministry</i> paper	10%
Post-Course assignment	40%

B. Class Participation

See V.A. above.

C. Late Assignments

Pre-course assignments are due at the beginning of the class week. The post-course assignment is due the fourth Friday after the class. Late work will be accepted, but 5% of the possible score will be deducted for each day the work is late, up to five days. No work more than five days late will be accepted. Exceptions may be made by the instructor or Dean of the participating seminary for medical or family emergencies.

D. Absences

Due to the “intensive week” format of this course, absences are not allowed. In the event of an emergency, the student should contact the instructor to see if an alternative can be worked out.

E. Letter/Numerical Grade Scale

A+	99-100	B+	91-93	C+	83-85	D+	75-77	F	0-69
A	96-98	B	88-90	C	80-82	D	72-74		
A-	94-95	B-	86-87	C-	78-79	D-	70-71		

VI. COURSE SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

A key component of this course is cultural immersion. The class will not just study the context of the town and country church, it will live in it. At least three field immersion experiences will be conducted during the class week. These may at times be “hands on” and may involve contact with livestock, soil, agricultural and industrial environments, and outdoor recreational activities. Students should bring a pair of old shoes or boots and at least one pair of jeans that can get “messy.”

The TACT Program and its participating seminaries do not discriminate on the basis of disability in the operation of any of its programs and activities. To avoid discrimination the student is responsible for informing the appropriate seminary office and the course instructor of any disabling condition that will require modifications.

VII. COURSE LECTURES AND ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8:00		Rural community institutions	A theology of t/c ministry	Basics of t/c church leadership	Christian education, youth and children's ministry, and discipleship in the t/c context
9:00		Becoming a student of rural culture	Taxonomy of t/c churches		
10:00			Basic tools for t/c ministry		
11:00					
12:00	Lunch provided in the classroom	Windshield reconnaissance field trip	Lunch	Lunch	
1:00	What is rural?		Personal issues in t/c ministry	Preaching, evangelism, missions, worship, vision casting, and pastoral care in the t/c context	
2:00	Agrarian/ Cosmopolitan compared and contrasted				
3:00	Rural cultural anthropology		Pastoral issues in t/c ministry		
4:00					
5:00					
6:00	Cultural immersion exercise TBA	Cultural immersion exercise TBA	Cultural immersion exercise TBA	Cultural immersion exercise TBA	
7:00					
8:00					