

**Developing Contemporary Worship Leaders**  
**MS 3XA3**  
**McMaster Divinity College**

**Instructor:** Dr. Wendy J. Porter  
**Location:** Compass Point Bible Church,  
 1500 Kerns Road,  
 Burlington, ON L7P 3A7  
**Credit Units:** 3

**Term:** Fall 2011 (Term 1)  
**Time:** 9.00 a.m.–4.00 p.m.  
**Days:** 4 Saturdays  
**September 24, October 15**  
**October 29, November 12**

**Contact Information:**

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**Course Description:** The notion of contemporary worship is always changing in its forms and the materials and resources that are used, and yet the foundations of that worship are rock-solid and eternal. The immeasurable creativity of a Creator God who has fashioned us to also have creative and imaginative minds allows for endless variety and creativity in shaping meaningful worship back to Him. Each time of worship can be a new and meaningful expression that lifts our hearts and minds to His. Our expanded understanding of God and our deepening relationship to Him is continually renewed and refreshed as we come to know more about his eternal nature, his endless love, his ongoing faithfulness, and the other aspects of his Being. At the same time, our hearts and minds will be engaged in reflecting that expansion, that depth, that renewal and refreshment in the ways we plan and lead and engage in worship together.

This class brings together current and future worship leaders, individuals who participate in worship teams, and those just interested in corporate worship, in order to:

- learn more about the biblical foundations of Christian worship.
- deepen in our own personal worship of God.
- explore the challenges of leading a congregation towards authentic and meaningful worship of God.
- develop and refine some of the necessary skills for this role.

This class is uniquely designed to provide foundational theory as well as allowing teams and individuals to learn with and from each other through practical, hands-on experience. Opportunity will be given to interact with and get feedback from the rest of the group while developing skills for leading a congregation in spiritual worship. Musical skills are helpful but not essential to learning from and contributing to this class.

**Course Objectives:** Through required and optional reading, lectures, class discussion, hands-on interactive sessions, class presentations of worship-leading, and written assignments (for those taking the class for credit), the student should begin to fulfill the following course objectives (under the headings of Imagining, Knowing, Being, Doing):

### **Imagining**

- to begin to visualize what meaningful corporate worship could look like
- to try to imagine what God wishes to see in his worshipers, how he envisions lives that are transformed by their whole-hearted worship of him
- to try to see through God's eyes what his ideal of a worship leader might look like
- to begin to imagine what each of us would look like if we were totally shaped by and filled with the Holy Spirit in our private and corporate worship

### **Knowing**

- to appreciate more deeply the always-contemporary yet unchanging biblical foundations of worship
- to deepen and broaden our perception of the Person that we worship, regardless of mode
- to allow Scripture to teach our minds and train our hearts for worship

### **Being**

- to develop a life-long desire to continually enter into the Presence of God—and to be re-shaped by that indwelling Presence
- to become molded by God's Word, to become Christ-centred, and to become empowered and refined by the Holy Spirit in our worship, whether corporate or private
- to become more compassionate towards one another as we think about worshipping one God together

### **Doing**

- to develop our range, quality and functionality of skills necessary for leading others to engagement with God in worship
- to improve our ability to choose worship music and other elements that contribute to meaningful congregational worship, musically, visually and theologically
- to actively contribute to creating worship segments and to participate fully in worship segments as part of the class
- to become more discerning in how to make valuable contributions to the worship environment and experience of our own local churches

### **Course Textbooks**

Required textbooks for this course are:

- Best, Harold M. *Unceasing Worship: Biblical Perspectives on Worship and the Arts*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press: 2003.
- Engle, Paul E., and Paul A. Basden, eds. *Exploring the Worship Spectrum: 6 Views*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004.

Students are encouraged to consider these and other books for your music and worship libraries:

Frame, John M. *Contemporary Worship Music: A Biblical Defense*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1997.

Hustad, Donald P. *Jubilate II: Church Music in Worship and Renewal*. Carol Stream, IL: Hope Publishing, 1993 (1981).

Mitchell, Paul. *I Don't Like that Music*. Carol Stream, IL: Hope Publishing, 1993.

Westermeyer, Paul. *Te Deum: The Church and Music*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1998.

Wilson-Dickson, Andrew. *The Story of Christian Music*. Oxford, UK: Lion Publishing, 1992.

**Students:** You are encouraged to purchase these textbooks from the Divinity College's book service, READ On Books, Room 218, McMaster Divinity College. These will also be available for purchase on the first day of class at Compass Point Bible Church. Bernice Quek goes to great lengths to provide these books at reasonable prices as a service to the Divinity College, as well as making them available on-location on the first day for classes being held off-site. Students that enroll in a class but purchase their books elsewhere make reasonable planning a difficulty. These books are also available for advance purchase from Bernice Quek at READ On Bookstores, 304 The East Mall, Suite 100, Etobicoke, ON M9C 5K1; phone 416-620-2934; fax 416-622-2308; e-mail [books@readon.ca](mailto:books@readon.ca). Website: <http://www.readon.ca/>

## Course Requirements and Assessments

**1. 20%—Weekly Worship Plans and Implementation.** Each student will be expected to show initiative in creatively thinking about and designing in-class worship presentations, many of which will be jointly planned. You will be expected to submit your completed worship plan for each week of the class, including your own subsequent commentary on issues and problems that may have arisen relating to themes or resources (whether in the planning or executing stages), noting ideas that seemed good but were impossible to execute, any revisions to the original plan, your reflection on the outcome of the presentation, troubles with transitions, how you functioned as a team member, etc. Though several students may/will participate in planning and preparing one worship plan, please submit these individually, in order to include your own evaluation, observation, assessment and any subsequent creative ideas that you would consider including or trying were you to try it again, or use it somewhere else (such as your own church). (1-3 pages each, including the worship plan.)

**Due: Each Week of Class, by the following Monday—including your follow-up assessment.**

**2. 20%—Paper of Imagination and Observation of Worship.** *God has sent an angel-in-training to observe your church in corporate worship and your own private time of worship. This angel is in training to more fully appreciate what God has in mind when it comes to corporate and private worship, and to develop discernment in how to assist earthly churches and earthly human beings to more fully experience worship the way God designed it. This angel's assignment is (1) to attend your church in order to observe and report back to God on the quality and depth of worship there, and to present some recommendations to him that might be beneficial for your church, and (2) to observe and evaluate the quality and depth of your own private times of worship, and to present some recommendations to him that might benefit you. What would the angel's report say?*

Take a minimum of one Sunday service to notice all that takes place in your church before you write the first segment of this paper. Be as honest and observant (and compassionate) as possible in writing the angel's assessment of and recommendations for your church, keeping in mind that you are writing the report through that angel's eyes, not just your own, and that it is being presented to God, not to a human being with human perspectives. Try to be equally honest, observant and compassionate in the angel's assessment of and recommendations for your own private times of worship.

Evaluation of this paper will be based on the depth of observation and analysis, as well as the quality of insight that is expressed, not on how "spiritual" your church or you appear to be. These papers are confidential, and any paper not picked up by its writer will be shredded at the conclusion of the term. (1500 words.)

**Angel Evaluation Due: Saturday #2, October 15, at the beginning of class.**

**3. 15%—Book Response.** Respond to Harold Best, *Unceasing Worship*, by describing the way or ways that this book challenges you in the area of worship, including insights and/or thoughtful critique. Provide rationale for opposite opinions, substantiate why you support an expressed view, and/or give personal insights into how your own thinking has been or is being changed or challenged by the particular observations or arguments that are presented by the author. If you have already read this book, you are encouraged to consult with the professor in choosing an alternate book for your response. Please note: This is not a book *report* (recounting what is in the book), but a book *response* (interacting thoughtfully and personally with the content of the book). (1000-1500 words.)

**Book Response Due: Saturday #3, October 29, at the beginning of class.**

**4. 20%—Seasonal Worship Plan.** Use this assignment to plan one or more services of worship (either to fit within your church's worship format or to explore something entirely outside the realm of your normal worship patterns) that coincide with one aspect of the Church Calendar or the Christian life of the church. This may include an Advent service, or a whole season of Advent services, one or more specific Christmas services, a service related to Lent, Good Friday or Easter Sunday, or a service of Baptism, etc. Include all the components of this service, such as written prayers, poems, segues (meaningful spoken

transitions, or specific musical transitions), music (include printed or recorded music, which will be returned), and projection media (e.g. powerpoint, etc.) or printed programs.

**Seasonal Worship Plan Due: Saturday #4, November 12, at the beginning of class, including all supporting materials.**

**5. 25%—Term Paper (A) or Worship Project (B).** Choose a specific area of worship or worship music that interests you. **A.** You may choose to write a **Term Paper** on your chosen area of worship/worship music (topic to be chosen in consultation with the instructor, paper to consist of approximately 4000 words). **B.** Alternatively, you may choose to develop and submit a creative **Worship Project** that addresses your chosen area of worship/worship music (topic and mode of project to be determined in consultation with the instructor, and equivalent to 4000 words).

In either case, the proposed topic and mode of delivery is to be determined by the third class (see below). Students are encouraged to correspond with the professor by email to discuss topics prior to this day. The standard minimum of 10 reference books/articles should be used for Term Paper (A). If music is being assessed or included in any way in this assignment, please provide printed or recorded copies (to be returned to the student when final papers are ready to be picked up).

**Proposed Topic and Mode: to be confirmed by Saturday #3, October 29.**

**Paper or Project Due: FRIDAY, November 25.**

**Note that papers or projects and all supporting materials (e.g. printed music, CDs, DVDs, printed programs, etc.) must be delivered and received before the end of Friday office hours (e.g. before 4:30 p.m. to guarantee that they will be received).**

Successful completion of this class for credit requires each of the assignments to be attempted. Failure to make a valid attempt to complete each of these requirements may constitute grounds for failure of the course.

### **Basic Class Format**

Mornings	9:00-12:00	<b>Opening Worship</b> (led by the instructor) <b>Teaching Session #1</b> <b>Discussion and/or Interactive Project</b> Short Break
Lunch Break	12:00-1:00	<b>Teaching Session # 2</b> (not provided)*
Afternoons	1:00-4:00	<b>Practical Training Session</b> (selected topics) <b>Group Worship Presentations: Prep Time</b> <b>Group Worship In-Class Presentations</b> <b>Interaction / Response</b> <b>Concluding Worship</b> (led by the instructor)

\*Note: Lunch is not provided, so please bring a bag lunch, or plan to make a very quick trip to one of the nearby restaurants (e.g. Williams, Tim Hortons, Swiss Chalet, Starbucks located inside Indigo, etc.) or to Sobeys (grocery store).

### ***About Class Presentations***

After the first day\*, material for class presentations is to be prepared in advance of the class, which will require groups to interact by email or in person, where possible, though some rehearsal time is built into each afternoon. If powerpoint slides or other projection media are being used, they are to be prepared and proof-read in advance, and ready for use on the day. Similarly, if handouts are to be used, they must be prepared and copied in advance. Any printed music that is needed by the group or by others must be provided.

Class presentations are intended as creative opportunities for learning and developing skills and material, so participants should not hesitate to use this opportunity to try new approaches, arrangements or material, but also keeping in mind the needs of your own congregation and the abilities of your own teams.

\*Students taking the course for credit should be in touch with the instructor prior to the first class in order to do some preparation for the first day's in-class worship presentations. Students from within the class are divided into groups, which takes place during the class, but some preparation in advance, including planning around the theme and bringing musical and other materials that could be used by one of the groups, will make this first day more beneficial and effective.

### **Tentative Class Schedule**

#### **Day 1: Saturday, September 24**

##### **First Things First: Whom Do We Worship? (Part I)**

Including:

- The God of the Old Testament
- Old Testament Foundations and Models of Worship
- The Psalms in Contemporary Worship
- The Hymnbook in Contemporary Worship(!)

##### **Technical Training Session: Topic 1**

(Each class may include one or more of the following Technical Training Sessions: Creative and Useful Projection, Layering a Worship Team, Creating an Arrangement, Effective Scripture Reading, Congregational Song, Segues in Worship, Songwriting for Worship, What the Worship Leader Wears [!], etc.)

#### **Day 2: Saturday, October 15**

##### **First Things First: Whom Do We Worship? (Part II)**

Including:

- Jesus of the New Testament
- New Testament Foundations and Models of Worship

- Jesus Teaches the Most Unlikely Worship Leader
- Spiritual Formation through The Sermon on the Mount
- Christian Church Musical Time-Line (part 1)

**Technical Training Session: Topic 2** (see above, to be determined)

**Day 3: Saturday, October 29**

**How Do We Worship in Spirit and in Truth? (Part I)**

Including:

- The Holy Spirit as Worship Leader and Prompter
- Christian Church Musical Time-Line (part 2)
- Worship Styles (Discussion from Class Textbook, *Exploring the Worship Spectrum*)
- Prayer in Worship

**Technical Training Session: Topic 3** (see above, to be determined)

**Day 4: Saturday, November 12**

**How Do We Worship in Spirit and in Truth? (Part II)**

Including:

- Having a Pastoral Heart
- The Future of Christian Worship
- The Church Calendar: Advent and Christmas Worship (a specific focus on how to lead meaningful worship in the Christmas season, that includes artistic and seamless integration of contemporary and traditional Christmas music and traditions together in intentional and compelling ways)

**Technical Training Session: Topic 4** (see above, to be determined)

Note: The instructor reserves the right to change the content of lectures and topics.

**A Learning Community**

This class is designed to be a learning community, a place where we each grow through positive interaction with one another, through constructive input and active interest in one another's growth and development, where we look honestly at Scripture, where we think deeply about ideas and preconceived notions, and where we benefit from developing and strengthening our faith, our calling and our ministries. As we all come to the community as people in process, we come with an eagerness to learn, both from God and from one another, with the result that we may—hopefully will—be challenged to become and to be reshaped into people that more fully reflect our Creator.

As a professor, I make it my responsibility to empower each class member as a learner by treating each student with respect and dignity. I am a fellow learner in the community and wish to offer information that I have learned and am learning, to share my own

reflection on and experience of our class material and topics, and to help provide and facilitate questions that will be beneficial for us to reflect on together. I also desire to give thoughtful evaluation and feedback to your thinking and practice, whether this is in class or through assignments, so that I provide as much opportunity for your own growth as possible through our collaborative efforts together.

Your role in this learning community is, in part, to commit yourself to the class throughout the semester that we are together. This includes your commitment to treat all members of our class, which may also include my teaching assistant, with respect and dignity. This also includes your own preparation to be fully engaged in this class. Your presence in each class is required in order for our community to function well and consistently. Please also be respectful and mindful of the church that assists us in making this location available for our class, by treating the building, equipment and property with care and tidiness.

Assignments should be handed in on time and in good order. Late assignments will be docked at the rate of 1% (considering each assignment as 100%) for each day late. Where possible, please submit assignments in hard copy (on standardized paper).

I would welcome the opportunity to meet and talk with you outside our class time. Please feel free to make an appointment with me if I can assist you or share in your learning experience in some way. I do have specific office hours at the Divinity College designed for student appointments, posted at the beginning of the semester, but other times are also available.

### **\*\* Statement on Academic Honesty**

Academic dishonesty is a serious offence that may take any number of forms, including plagiarism, the submission of work that is not one's own or for which previous credit has been obtained, and/or unauthorized collaboration with other students. Academic dishonesty can result in severe consequences, e.g., failure of the assignment, failure of the course, a notation on one's academic transcript, and/or suspension or expulsion from the College.

Students are responsible for understanding what constitutes academic dishonesty. Please refer to the Divinity College Statement on Academic Honesty ~ [www.madciv.ca/regs/honesty.php](http://www.madciv.ca/regs/honesty.php).

### **Gender Inclusive Language**

McMaster Divinity College uses inclusive language for human beings in worship services, student written materials, and all of its publications. In reference to biblical texts, the integrity of the original expressions and the names of God should be respected. The NRSV and TNIV are examples of the use of inclusive language for human beings. It is expected that inclusive language will be used in chapel services and all MDC assignments.

**Please Note: This syllabus is the property of the instructor and is prepared with currently available information. The instructor reserves the right to make changes and revisions up to and including the first day of class.**