

MINISTERING IN THE TOWN AND COUNTRY CHURCH SYLLABUS

Hybrid class – offered on-line and in-person

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 Koessler, John. *No Little Places: The Untapped Potential of the Small-Town Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2017 ed. (122 pgs.)

Brown, David L. and Schafft, Kai A. *Rural People and Communities in the 21st Century: Resilience and Transformation*. Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2018. (260 pgs.)

Urbanska, Wanda, and Levering, Frank. *Moving to a Small Town: A Guidebook for Moving from Urban to Rural America*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996. pp. 263-320 (58 pgs.)

NOTE: this reading is online in pdf format at the TACT website.

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, click [here](#) to read these pages on-line.)

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.

NOTE: Written assignments may be submitted electronically (preferably as Word or Word-compatible documents) as email attachments to tact@rhma.org with the word "Assignments" in the subject line.

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 and country ministry context (the context in which you presently serve or a town and country context you may have visited, 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 . . ." (Reading and writing time = 11 hours).

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. (Reading and writing time = 11 hours)
2. From your reading of *Rural People and Communities*, write a 4-6 page paper stating one thing from each of the book's first four sections you found applicable to planning for ministry in a town and country (rural) community. (Reading and writing time = 21 hours)
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. (Reading and writing time = 8 hours)
4. As you read *Liberating Ministry from the Success Syndrome*, reflect on how this book applies to the town and country context. Write a 3-4 page paper reflecting on each of the seven definitions of success given in chapters three through nine in light of ministry in a context where you may not have other people on the church staff or an office in the church building, and in a community where everyone knows who you are and what you do. (Reading, reflecting, and writing time = 16 hours)

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. (Research, reflection, and writing time = 36 hours)

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 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

The schedule below is approximate and subject to change.

Online students: In lieu of in-person cultural immersion experiences, you will be provided links to videos to watch. Please be prepared to discuss these in class.

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8:00 a.m.	Getting to know rural America What is rural? Rural cultural anthropology	Rural tools, history, institutions Taxonomy of town and country churches Becoming a student of t/c culture	A theology of t/c ministry Tools for t/c ministry Pastoral/church issues	Foundational premises for the t/c church Relational dynamics T/c church leadership	Evangelism, missions, Christian education, youth and children's ministries, and discipleship in the t/c context Class debriefing Closing challenge
Noon	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Class ends at noon
1:30 p.m.	Rural cultural anthropology (continued)	Cultural immersion exercise TBA	Pastoral/personal issues Pastoral counseling T/c youth Ag finances	Worship, preaching, and other ministries Cultural immersion exercise TBA	
5:00 p.m.	Cultural immersion exercise TBA	Discussion with a long-time country church pastor Debriefing our cultural immersion experiences	Done for the day	Cultural immersion exercise (continued)	