

**COURSE OF STUDY SCHOOL OF OHIO**  
**Methodist Theological School in Ohio**  
**COURSE 124 – Transformative Leadership**  
**Spring 2026**

*This course will be offered fully online, with 12 synchronous hours via Zoom on February 13-14 and March 13-14, with 8 asynchronous hours that will utilize Populi.*

Instructor:

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If you don't like something, change it. If you can't change it, change your attitude.

~ Maya Angelou

**Course Description and Objectives:**

This course forms the student's identity as pastoral leader and change agent in congregations, the United Methodist Church, and the world.

Students will be able to:

1. Identify and understand the attributes of good leaders, biblically and theologically.
2. Evaluate and strengthen their own identities and skills as pastoral leaders.
3. Explain and reflect on the nature of change in the local congregation and wider society.
4. Implement visioning, strategizing, and planning processes in their local congregations.

**Required Textbooks:**

- Scharmer, Otto and Katrin Kaufer, *Presencing: 7 Practices for Transforming Self, Society, and Business*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2025.
- O'Brien, Brandon and Jim Belcher, *The Strategically Small Church: Intimate, Nimble, Authentic and Effective* (Bethany House, 2010)

**Required Readings (pdfs):** Several pdf selections from *HBR's 10 Must Reads on Leadership, Change Management, and Strategy*. (3 different texts) Harvard Business Review, 2011 (available as pdfs on course shell)

- Ancona, Deborah and Thomas W. Malone, Wanda J. Orlikowski, and Peter M Senge, "In Praise of the Incomplete Leader" *On Leadership*
- Heifetz, Ronald A. and Donald L. Laurie, "The Work of Leadership" *On Leadership*
- Kegan, Robert and Lisa Laskow Lahey, "The Real Reason People Don't Change" *On Change Management*
- Kotter, John P. "What Leaders Really Do" *On Leadership*
- Rogers, Paul and Marcia Blenko, "Who Has the D?" *On Strategy*
- Rooke, David and William R. Torbert, "Seven Transformations of Leadership" *On Leadership*

*(Students are responsible for obtaining their own books)*

## **VI. CALENDAR**

Pre-work is expected to be completed upon ‘arrival’ into the Zoom classroom. Typical work online includes reading assigned books or documents, engaging in on-line discussion groups, creating collaborative structures or interactions with congregational members, and a final paper and vision project.

### ***Zoom – Digital Classroom Gatherings***

February 13: 3-5 p.m.

February 14: 9-11 a.m. 1-3 p.m. (with worship 11:15 a.m.-noon)

March 13: 3-5 p.m.

March 14: 9-11 a.m. 1-3 p.m. (with worship 11:15 a.m.-noon)

*Pework:* Write a 3 page paper (dbl-spaced; 1” margins) offering a preliminary reflection on the pressing themes of “transformational leadership” you see in “In Praise of the Incomplete Leader,” “The Work of Leadership,” and “What Leaders Really Do.” Be sure to cite each essay while bringing their contributions to your ongoing work in congregational contexts. [The “Grace-Gifts Inventory” for “Rediscovering Spiritual Gifts”, pdf available on course shell, is an optional tool for you, if you desire to explore it as well.] Listening for what kind of feedback you might desire, ask a congregational leader/companion in your church ‘system’ – lay-leader, mentor, spiritual director, etc. to read your reflection, offering the feedback you asked for...

### ***Optional:***

1. Complete “the Grace-Gifts Discovery Inventory,” uploadable at the course shell. Score your own results (p. 179 of the Inventory) and bring them to class. Prayerfully review the biblical underpinnings of your top 5 gifts.
2. Watch the following TedTalk by Shonda Rhimes, listening for any wisdom in your own learning-leadership life:  
[https://www.ted.com/talks/shonda\\_rhimes\\_my\\_year\\_of\\_saying\\_yes\\_to\\_everything?referrer=playlist-ted\\_talks\\_by\\_strong\\_women\\_lead](https://www.ted.com/talks/shonda_rhimes_my_year_of_saying_yes_to_everything?referrer=playlist-ted_talks_by_strong_women_lead)

### **February 13-14**

#### **Gathering-Opening; Lectures; Discussions**

*Have also read:*

“See for Yourself: Reimagining Ministry Success” (first chapter, O’Brien)

Scharmer & Kaufer, *Presencing*: Introduction & Chapter One (pp 1-21)

Have your 3-pg reflection readily available.

### **Week One (February 16-21)**

1. Read O’Brien, Chapter 2-3 (Downward Mobility: Four Ministries Shrink for the Kingdom’s Sake & Keeping it Real: the Authentic Church)
2. Read Scharmer & Kaufer: Chapters 2&3 (pp 23-54)
3. Participate in discussion forum by Thursday (midnight), responding to at least three colleagues by end of week (Saturday midnight)

4. Schedule a coffee/lunch time (via Zoom or phone) with your congregational-companion for sometime the next week or so – debrief your weekend’s learnings/discernment

### **Week Two (Feb 23-28)**

1. Read O’Brien, Chapters 4-5
2. Read Scharmer & Kaufer, Chapter 4 (pp 55-92)
3. Participate in discussion forum by Thursday (midnight), responding to at least three colleagues by end of week (Saturday midnight)

### **Week Three (Mar 2-7)**

1. Read O’Brien, Chapters 6-7
2. Read Scharmer & Kaufer: Chapter 5 (pp. 93-137)
3. Participate in discussion forum by Thursday PM, responding to at least three colleagues by end of week (Saturday midnight)

### **Week Four (Mar 9-12)**

1. Read O’Brien, Chapter 8
2. Read Scharmer & Kaufer, Chapters 6&7 (pp. 139-173)
3. Meet again with your congregational companion(s) via phone or coffee, offer some readback lines from the learnings/readings and some of what is stirring in you. Pray together, listen together, brainstorm together, for what all is Rising in your midst

### **March 13-14**

#### ***Zoom – Digital Classroom Gatherings***

March 13: 3-5 p.m.

March 14: 9-11 a.m. 1-3 p.m. (with worship 11:15 a.m.-noon)

After Classroom Gatherings: Post in the *Leadership Synthesis Discussion* your responses to the following questions. Review your notes, your readback lines/highlighting, your reflections (pre-work and post-class) before you post. (Thanks to Dan Gildner for the assignment/prompt)

- a. What have I learned about the character of a pastoral leader? (at least 2 things)
- b. What have I learned about the competence of a pastoral leader? (at least 2 things)
- c. What have I learned about the clarity of vision of a pastoral leader? (at least 2 things)

Review the directions (below) about the final paper and the vision project. Begin to craft a draft, just getting thoughts onto the page. Share with congregational companion(s), glean ideas and comments, encouragement and challenge from them.

**Final Paper/Project due Friday March 20<sup>th</sup>, 5 p.m. uploaded lastname.firstname file to [lmhess@united.edu](mailto:lmhess@united.edu) as well as the Populi course shell.**

### **FINAL PAPER AND VISION PROJECT SUMMARY**

**Personal Leadership & Change Paper (6-8 pages)** *Description:* After reading through the texts and participating in the course work:

- a. Define a Biblical, pastoral leader. List at least 10 attributes gleaned from the course and/or your life experience. List the sources. (~3 pages)

- b. How has God called and gifted you to be a transformational, biblical, pastoral leader? How does your gifts/graces inventory (or any other assessment you like) set you up for transformational ministry? What obstacles or weaknesses need acknowledged and dealt with for transformational ministry to happen? (~2 pages)
- c. Close your paper with a summary of leadership theory, common obstacles, etc. that you can give to your church board about how to help bring about change. (1 page)

### **Vision-Project (6-8 pages)**

*Description:* Submit a summary of what you and your congregational companions have Received in these weeks:

1. Discernment - What has been the fruit of your companion's/group's prayerful discernment? What did God do through the prayer time with one another?
2. "Snapshot" – Using the tools from class identify the current reality of your context. Where are you?
3. "Paint a Picture" – Identify the vision or picture that God has articulated for your context. Where are you going?
4. "Define the Gap" – What are the challenges, internal and external, between where you are and where God is calling?
5. "Strategy" – How will you get to where God is inviting you to be? This should be the most robust part of your paper. It should address things like:
  - a. What resources are needed (people, financial, timing, etc.)?
  - b. What data (information and narratives) is needed before moving forward?
  - c. What is needed from you as the pastoral leader?
  - d. What needs set aside while this process happens?
  - e. How will you handle conflict that arises?
  - f. How will you know if the change is "faithful"?
6. Overall Learning – Offer some self-reflection as to what you learned from this process.

**Note on Online Discussions** For the community of learning to be most effective, we all need to be engaged. You have six days for each module. You must find time during those six days. All Sundays have been excluded from the calendar datings, in honor of the wisdom (and commandment) to Keep the Sabbath. The community life of each of us differs, but the hope is to encourage a 24/6 mentality, even in online learning. Your initial post each week is due by Thursday, 11:59 pm unless otherwise noted. Your responses to colleagues' work are due no later than Saturday 11:59 pm.

**Church duties are not an excuse for absence.** Your appointment to a local church takes into account the need for school preparation. As part of your appointment, you are expected to be present in online discussions and Zoom sessions.

Specific rubrics will be available in the online shell.

## **VII: SEMINARY STANDARDS:**

### **A. Inclusive language**

Methodist Theological School has an official policy regarding the use of Inclusive Language. The policy may be found in the Seminary Catalog and further explained in the Student Handbook. If you have specific questions, please see the instructor.

### **B. Academic Integrity**

Student integrity regarding all work assigned in this class is a basic expectation of the Seminary community. A detailed policy regarding what constitutes a violation of academic integrity can be found in the Student Handbook (and at the end of this syllabus—section XII).

### **C. Online Confidentiality**

One of the highlights of the online classroom is that students can draw from the experiences shared during class discussions and in written work. However, it is imperative that students do not share information that is confidential, privileged, or proprietary in nature. In addition, students are expected to honor the privacy and confidentiality of their classmates by not disclosing online conversations with those outside of the classroom.

### **D. Statement on Disability**

Any student who may need accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the Course of Study Coordinator.

### **Remember:**

- RELAX; it will all work out as Spirit intends.
- Develop a weekly plan for checking your email and the online classroom several times a week
- The News Forum cannot be unsubscribed and will hold every posting for the entire semester; you can always return to doublecheck details and directions
- Write ALL your posting-entries *first* in a word-processing document, *not* the online shell; it doesn't happen often but you may be kicked off the system and lose your work
- You have a body and it can't sit at the computer for 4 hours in a row; be attentive to your needs even as you complete the assignments and engage the learning environment for your own benefit.

## **IX. EVALUATION:**

### **Assignments & Method of Determining Grade**

Pre-Work	10%
Zoom sessions	30%
Online Work	40%
Final Paper & Visioning Project	20%

**Critical and substantive participation:** This course requires a practice called 'readbacks' and then sustained engagement with them, with course content as a whole. A 'readback line' is a direct quote from one of the readings or lectures, printed verbatim on the posting/page with proper citation/source named. This insures critical attention is paid to the actual words spoken/read, in close proximity to the words that reflect upon them.

**Substantive participation** means two things over the course of a week's assignments. One, it means **at least 2-3 readbacks from each reading** (for a B level participation) and then the full measure of words required for the posting. Readback lines do not count in the word-count. Two, it means engaging with several colleagues' postings, above the required number moves participation into 'excellent' and not just

‘substantive.’ **The requirements listed each week are for B performance expectations.** Above these stated requirements earns some flavor of A, below earns a lower grade.

## **X. STUDENT COURSE EVALUATIONS:**

It is very important for students to submit a course evaluation toward the end of the semester. Instructors do not see the student evaluations at all until after the instructors have submitted the students’ final official grades. Students should feel free to evaluate the course without any negative ramifications.

## **XI. REFERENCE BIBLIOGRAPHY**

- Birch, Bruce and Lewis Parks, *Ducking Spears, Dancing Madly: a Biblical Model of Church Leadership* (Abingdon, 2004) – GBHEM text
- Goleman, Daniel. “What Makes a Leader?” *HBR’s 10 Must Reads On Leadership*. HBR 2011. (pdf on shell)
- Green, Carl. “Leadership Theory of a Protestant Minister,” *Journal of Leadership Studies*, 2001, Vol. 8, No. 1. (pdf on shell)
- Hess, Lisa M. “Shadowdancing: Fear as a Pathway to Transformation” (essay for *Review and Expositor*, 2018 (pdf on shell)
- Kelly, Thomas. *Testament of Devotion* (Harper&Brothers, 1941; renewed 1969)
- Moxley, Russ S. *Leadership & Spirit: Breathing New Vitality and Energy into Individuals and Organizations* (Jossey-Bass, 2000)
- Nixon, Paul. *I Refuse to Lead a Dying Church* (Pilgrim Press, 2006)
- Snow, Luther K. *The Power of Asset Mapping: How Your Congregation Can Act on Its Gifts* (Alban, 2004)
- Steinke, Peter L. *How Your Church Family Works* (Alban, 2000)
- Ware, Corinne. *Discover Your Spiritual Type: A Guide to Individual and Congregational Growth* (Alban, 1995).

## **XII. COSSO ACADEMIC HONOR POLICY**

The Course of Study School of Ohio requires that all material submitted by a student in fulfilling academic requirements must be the original work of the student.

Violations of academic honor include any action by a student indicating lack of integrity in academic ethics. Violations include, but are not limited to, cheating and plagiarism.

Cheating includes seeking, acquiring, receiving or passing on information about the content of an examination prior to its authorized release or during its administration. Cheating also includes seeking, using, giving or obtaining unauthorized assistance in any academic assignment or examination.

Plagiarism is the act of presenting the published or unpublished words or ideas of another [including online resources] as if it were one’s own work. A writer’s work should be regarded as his or her own property. Any person who knowingly (whether intentionally or unintentionally) uses a writer’s distinctive work without proper acknowledgement is guilty of plagiarism.

A student found guilty of a violation of the academic honor code, after a review of the case, may be subject to one or more of the following sanctions:

- (1) warning;
- (2) failing grade for the assignment and/or course;
- (3) probation;
- (4) suspension;
- (5) dismissal from the Course of Study School of Ohio.

In severe or repeat cases (regardless of the sanctions) a letter will be sent to the student's District Superintendent and Board of Ordained Ministry representative.

### **XIII. COSSO ATTENDANCE POLICY**

National policy from the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM) states that a student is expected to attend every class session. Unexcused absences may be cause for loss of credit or dismissal from the school. A student missing 20% or more of the classroom work shall not receive credit for the class. In the event of extenuating circumstances which require the student to miss up to 20% of the synchronous course time (whether in-person or on Zoom), the student should contact both the instructor and the Director prior to the start of the class to get approval and discuss make-up work. (Extenuating circumstances include emergency situations, illness, and dire circumstances, for example. Students are to provide back-up coverage at the local church while attending COS classes.)

Students attending online are required to show their faces the entire class time in order to be considered present, unless internet bandwidth issues or emergency circumstances (e.g., a power outage) necessitate turning off one's camera or calling in to class by phone. You are expected to attend class as you would in a face-to-face classroom (e.g, not driving). During asynchronous class time, faculty may monitor time used in posting and responding to colleagues to track your participation.

**Cancellation and Withdrawal:** Student must notify the COSSO office if they will be unable to attend class for which they are registered. Although there is no penalty when withdrawing more than two weeks in advance of the beginning of a term, registration fees are nontransferable and nonrefundable. A \$50.00 late withdrawal fee is charged for all withdrawals within two weeks of the start of a class. All tuition and housing payments are applied to a future term.

Students withdrawing after the start of a term will be assigned a grade of AW (Administrative Withdrawal) and will be responsible for the full \$300.00 tuition amount. Any annual conference scholarship applied to the student billing record becomes the student's responsibility and is due by the end of the term. Housing payment is non-refundable.

**No Shows:** Except in cases of immediate and dire emergencies, if a student misses any class without notifying the COSSO office, tuition and housing fees are due immediately, a \$50.00 no show fee is charged, and the student will receive an "F" in the class.