



MB BIBLICAL
SEMINARY

Building Relationships Across Cultures DSC 610 ST

The mission of MB Seminary is to educate and equip men and women to help lead the church in reaching Canada and beyond with the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Instructor: Doug Heidebrecht, PhD
Associate Professor of Mission and Theology
Email: dougheidebrecht@mbseminary.ca
Credit Hours: 3
Prerequisites: None
Course Term: November 17, 2025 to January 17, 2026
Instruction: Teaching Intensive at Steinbach MB Church

- November 21 (6:30 - 9:30 pm)
- November 22 (8:30 - 4:30 pm)

Online Session

- December 9 (7:00-8:30 pm CST)

Course Description

How do we build relationships across cultures within our culturally diverse neighborhoods and church communities? This course will explore how cultural awareness and intercultural skills open new opportunities to share the love of Christ through hospitality and friendship. This course will also explore how we can serve more effectively on multicultural teams and through cross-cultural partnerships.

Objectives

This course's themes are informed by a distinct MB perspective in accordance with the Mennonite-Brethren Confession of Faith. By the end of this course, each student should:

- Understand and appreciate diverse cultural approaches that shape relationships across cultures.
- Develop practical skills for building mutual friendships across cultures.
- Explore ways of connecting and developing relationships with neighbors who are from different cultural backgrounds.
- Explore how to serve effectively together on multicultural teams within the church or in cross-cultural ministry partnerships.

Course Textbooks

Hedinger, Mark. *Culture Learning: The Art of Understanding What No One Can Teach You.*

Portland: CultureBound, 2021. (139 pages)

Hibbert, Evelyn & Richard. *Leading Multicultural Teams.* Littleton: William Carey Library, 2014. (212 pages)

Meyer, Erin. *The Culture Map: Decoding How People Think, Lead, and Get Things Done Across Cultures.* New York: PublicAffairs, 2014. (253 pages)

Pathak, Jay and Dave Runyon. *The Art of Neighboring: Building Genuine Relationships Right Outside Your Door.* Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2012. (184 pages)

Total pages = 788

Required Inventory

Personal Profile and Country Mapping Tool

<https://erinmeyer.com/tools/the-personal-profile-tool/>

Access for 24 hours - \$9.95 USD

Access for 7 days – \$12.95 USD

Learning Intensive Schedule

Teaching Weekend (Steinbach MB Church)	
Friday, November 21, 2025	6:30 – 9:30 pm
Session 1	Course Introduction
Session 2	Navigating Cultural Differences
Saturday, November 22, 2025	8:30 - 4:30 pm
Session 3	Navigating Cultural Differences
Session 4	Developing Friendships across Cultures
Session 5	Strangers are Neighbors
Session 6	Serving Together

Note: Attending all sessions of the course intensive is a requirement for passing the course.

Course Assignments

The assignments for this course four assignments and the course evaluation. If you ever have an idea for an alternative assignment that you believe would have greater personal value and would still meet the objectives of the course, feel free to talk with me about it. Please double-space all written assignments.

Assignments are due by 11:59 pm (your time) on the day they are due. I would ask that you submit your assignments in Populi. Once I have marked your assignment, I will put it in your grade book in Populi where you can check your grade and review the comments I made on the assignment (you will receive an automatic notification whenever I put a graded assignment in your grade book). Please note that I typically deduct 5% of an assignment's total possible value for each week that it is late (assignments submitted more than two weeks beyond the due date will not be accepted). If you find that you are unable to complete an assignment on time, I will grant one extension of up to one week for one assignment during the course (without penalty) when you inform me of your need for an extension before the due date for that particular assignment. I will also consider extensions in exceptional circumstances such as a medical emergency (when a doctor's note accompanies the request).

Overview of Assignments

Week	Due Date	Assignments	Percentage of Final Grade	Cumulative Percentage
Week 1	Nov 21-22	Learning Intensive		
Week 2	Dec 1	Personal and Cultural Profile	20%	20%
	Dec 1	Neighborhood Profile	5%	25%
Week 3	Dec 8	The Culture Tree	20%	45%
Week 4	Dec 9	Online Session		
Week 5	Dec 22	Connecting with Neighbors	15%	60%
		Discussion Groups #1		
Week 6	Dec 25	Christmas		
Week 7	Jan 1	New Years Day		
Week 8		Discussion Groups #2	5%	65%
Week 9	Jan 17	Leading Multicultural Teams	35%	100%
Week 9	Jan 17	Course Evaluation	-----	-----

A. Personal and Cultural Profile Comparison (worth 20% of final grade)

Required Reading – *The Culture Map* by Meyer

Required Inventories – Personal Profile and Country Mapping Tool

During the first week of the course (**November 17-21**) prior to the Learning Intensive weekend, complete the Personal Profile Tool on the Erin Meyer website. There is a small fee required to access this tool. Please complete the following:

- 1) Choose your identified Cultural Profile (e.g. Canada or another country) and complete the short questionnaire. Print the report, which compares your Personal Profile with your identified Culture Profile, both as a pdf and a hardcopy. Please ensure that you save it as a file on your computer. **Please bring a copy of your Personal Profile report to the first session of the Learning Intensive.**
- 2) Reflect on how your Personal Profile compares to your identified Cultural Profile – which dimensions are similar and which are different? What may have shaped these similarities and/or differences in your own life?
- 3) Compare your Personal Profile with two other Cultural Profiles from the list of 65 countries. Please choose countries that represent the background of current friends or colleagues, or places where you have personally visited. Reflect on how your own Personal Profile compares with these two Cultural Profiles – what are the key differences and similarities? Please include several examples from your experience that can illustrate what you observe.

Assignment length: 1500 words

Due: Monday, December 1

B. The Culture Tree (worth 20% of final grade)

Required Reading – *Culture Learning* by Hedinger

Choose a partner from the course and use the model of The Culture Tree found in *Culture Learning* (Chapter 6) to describe each other's cultural contexts. You will describe the nine elements of The Cultural Tree regarding your partner and he/she will describe your cultural context. Ask each other questions in order to explore how the various aspects of your cultural context work together to shape who you are. As part of the exercise, share with each other your story – what it was like to grow up in your family and where you lived. How do your experiences reflect your cultural context?

What are several key insights you have learned regarding the cultural context of both yourself and your partner in this assignment? How did this exercise help you better understand yourself? Please also engage with what you have learned from Hedinger.

Assignment length: 1500 words

Due: Monday, December 8

C. Loving our Neighbors

Required Reading – *The Art of Neighboring* by Pathak and Runyon

1) Neighborhood Profile (worth 5% of final grade) - Complete the neighborhood profile on pages 36-38 of *The Art of Neighboring*. Describe your neighborhood (or work setting) and the relationships you have with your neighbors/colleagues. Identify which three words best describe each of your closest neighbors/colleagues – stranger, acquaintance, or relationship. Complete this during the week following the Learning Intensive.

Assignment length: 500 words

Due: Monday, December 1

2) Connecting with Neighbors (worth 15% of final grade) - Intentionally connect with at least two of your neighbors/colleagues. What are some purposeful ways you sought to connect with those around you that moved your connection from stranger to acquaintance or from acquaintance to relationship? For example, did you invite them for coffee or a meal; did you share your story; did you ask them for help or advice? Reflect on the barriers you had to overcome to make these connections and the impact this exercise has had in your own life. How have these experiences shaped your relationships with your neighbors/colleagues? What did you learn about crossing cultures (if this was part of your experience)?

Assignment length: 1000 words

Due: Monday, December 22

D. Discussion Groups (5% of the final grade)

During weeks 5 and 8, you will meet in a church-based discussion group for 90 minutes to discuss your experience connecting with your neighbors (week 5) and leading multicultural teams (week 8). A designated leader from the host church will facilitate the church-based discussion groups for students from the host church. If you attend another church, please arrange to meet with a leader from your church (and any other students in the class from your church) to discuss your integration projects (and send me the name and email address of the leader, so that I can contact them about your participation grade). Your group leader will coordinate with you and the other group members as to when it would be best to meet.

The assessment of participation in discussion groups involves attendance and actual participation in the group sessions (both are worth 50% of the discussion group mark). The discussion group leaders will use the following rubric to assess each group member's participation:

Excellent participation (worth 47-50/50) – The group member consistently engaged in the group conversations. The person did an excellent job listening to other group members and consistently added meaningful content to the conversations.

Great participation (worth 43-46/50) – The group member engaged in the group conversations most of the time. The person paid attention to what others said and added relevant content to the discussions fairly regularly.

Good participation (worth 40-43/50) – The group member sometimes engaged in the group conversations. The person was somewhat attentive to the group conversation and would add relevant content periodically.

Fair participation (worth 35-39/50) – The group member did not often engage in group conversations. The person seemed out of touch with the group conversation and would rarely add relevant content.

Poor participation (worth less than 35/50) – The group member rarely, if ever, engaged in the group conversations. The person seemed distant and uninterested in the group discussion and even other group members.

E. Leading Multicultural Teams (worth 35% of final grade)

Required Reading – *Leading Multicultural Teams* by Hibbert and Hibbert

Please identify a team you are currently part of OR a team you were part of in the past, which was made up of participants from different cultural backgrounds. (Please talk with me if you have not participated in this kind of team).

- 1) Please describe the make-up (bicultural or multicultural team) of the team (do NOT provide names of the participants) along with its shared vision or purpose.
- 2) Describe the nature of the cultural differences among team members using 3-4 of the Cultural Dimensions described by Meyer in *The Culture Map*. How did these dimensions shape the functioning of the team?
- 3) Imagine you were the leader of this team (perhaps you were). First, how would you lead/facilitate communication within the team, given the cultural differences on the team? Hibbert/Hibbert provide a helpful model of communication (p. 152). Second, how would you lead/guide the team through a conflict, given the cultural differences on the team? Hibbert/Hibbert provide a helpful model of conflict management (p. 148).
- 4) Complete the “Multicultural Team Leader Inventory” found in *Leading Multicultural Teams* (pp. 223-225). Reflect on both your strengths and growth areas as a leader of multicultural teams. What would be some concrete steps you could take to develop your character as a leader?

Assignment length: 3000 words

Due: Saturday, January 17

F. Course Evaluation

Near the conclusion of this course, you will be asked to complete a course evaluation. Because feedback is very important to us, the course evaluation is a required part of the course and is tied to the submission of your last assignment. The course evaluation will be integrated into the Populi classroom in Week 7.

Grading Scale

Letter Grade	Percentage	Description	Grade Point	Meaning in Graduate Work
A+	97-100	Superior	4.30	Exceptionally well-reasoned, compelling development of position. Outstanding incorporation of personal vision as well as of references and resources. Strikingly appropriate examples. Extraordinary insight, critical analytical and evaluative ability, and creativity. Superlative style and language usage. Makes an original contribution and is potentially publishable.
A	93-96.99	Excellent	4.00	Well-argued and convincing development of position. Insightful incorporation of personal vision as well as of references and resources. Notably appropriate examples. Excellent insight, critical analytic and evaluative ability, and creativity. Impressive style and language use.
A-	90-92.99	Very Good	3.70	Thorough and plausible development of position. Skilful incorporation of personal vision as well as of references and resources. Very good examples. Very good insight, analytic and evaluative ability, and creativity. Commendable and fluent style and language usage.
B+	87-89.99	Proficient	3.30	Proficient development of position. Appropriate incorporation of personal vision as well as of references and resources. Relevant examples. Good quality insight, analytic and evaluative ability, and creativity. Clear and correct style and language usage.
B	83-86.99	Good	3.00	Competent development of position, but possibly with some gaps and/or limitations. Good incorporation of personal vision as well as of references and resources. Good examples. Reasonable insight, analytic and evaluative ability. Little creativity. Generally good style and language usage, but possibly with some minor flaws.
B-	80-82.99	Average	2.70	Average development of position, but with obvious gaps and/or limitations. Satisfactory incorporation of personal vision as well as of references and resources. Satisfactory examples. Reasonable insight, analytic and evaluative ability. Little creativity. Generally satisfactory style and language usage, but possibly with some minor flaws.
C+	77-79.99	Adequate	2.30	Adequate development of position with significant gaps and/or limitations. Some incorporation of personal vision as well as references and resources. Adequate use of examples. Very little creativity. Considerable number of issues related to coherence and style.
C	73-76.99	Acceptable	2.00	Limited development of position with a noticeable lack of consistency with personal vision or references. Limited integration with external sources. Acceptable analytic and evaluative ability. Numerous weaknesses in terms of clarity, coherence, and grammar.
C-	70-72.99	Needs Work	1.70	Passable but unimpressive development of position. Position not completely consistent with personal vision <i>or</i> references and resources not taken fully into account <i>or</i> examples are basic or not completely convincing <i>or</i> barely acceptable insight and analytic and evaluative ability. Adequate style and language usage, but with weaknesses in some respects (e.g., clarity, coherence, grammar). Overall quality shows noticeable deficiencies.
F	Below 70	Below Standard	0.00	Unacceptable work at graduate level. Shows lack of understanding and/or competence in several of the criteria described above. This grade is a failing grade at the graduate level.

Assignment Assessment

When I assess written assignments and presentations, I tend to look for the following:

- Appropriateness – The content matches the requirements of the assignments.
- Substantiveness – The content reveals deeper level thinking. This may take the form of critiquing existing ideas and proposing new ones. It may involve applying ideas from the readings and class discussions in deeply personal ways. It could also include a novel integration of ideas from various sources.
- Coherence – The content flows in a consistent and meaningful way.
- Engaging – The writing style does not distract from the content (e.g. grammatical mistakes) but rather engages the reader's attention. You may wish to use creative title pages that introduce a theme or multiple themes from your assignment in an engaging way.

Important Academic Notes

Academic Integrity and Avoiding Plagiarism

As Christian scholars pursuing higher education, academic integrity is a core value of the entire MB Seminary community. Students are invited into this scholarly culture and required to abide by the principles of sound academic scholarship at MB Seminary.

Artificial Intelligence

Students may use AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Bing) to assist with research for assignments in this course, provided that any assistance or content provided or created by the AI tools is appropriately identified as a source and fully cited. This includes citing the exact prompts used. Citation is not needed for simple proof-reading and editing (eg, Grammarly); however, any use of AI tools may only support your work. AI may not be used to transform, translate, paraphrase, or increase the fluency of your original work in any way. Failure to clearly indicate and reference AI-generated material or the use of AI paraphrasing tools that alter syntax, originality and/or clarity will be considered a violation of academic integrity.

Failure to clearly indicate and reference AI-generated material will be reported as academic misconduct. Students should consult the instructor if they have any questions about using generative AI tools.

Paper Formatting

Students are required to adhere to the Turabian Notes (Bibliography) format for all papers. Please consult the [Turabian Citation Quick Guide](#) for information or:

Turabian, Kate, L. *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Thesis, and Dissertations*, 9th ed. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2018.

Assignment Grade Appeals

Students can appeal their grade to the course instructor by stating in writing their reasons for contesting the grade. The deadline for such appeals is one week after the student has received their grade. Formal course grade appeals can be made directly to Dr. Brian Cooper, Director of Student Development, briancooper@mbseminary.ca.

Web Support-Student Portal — <https://mbseminary.populiweb.com>

All students at MB Seminary will receive an MBS-Populi username and password. This is determined at the time of an online application. If you have any difficulty with your password or your login credentials, please contact Keith Reed, Director of Church Equipping, keithreed@mbseminary.ca.