



Bricks & Mortals

Syllabus

Sacred Space and Stewardship: Multifaith Ethics and Real Estate for Ministry

Author: Rev. Derrick McQueen, Ph.D., D-Petros Oikos, LLC

**Course Title: Sacred Space and Stewardship: Multifaith Ethics
and Real Estate for Ministry**

Program Level: Graduate – Seminary / Theological Education

Credits: 3

Instructor: [Instructor Name]

Institution: [Seminary Name]

Schedule: [Day/Time] | [Start Date] – [End Date]

Location: [Classroom / Online]

Course Description

This interdisciplinary course explores the theology, ethics, and management of religious space. Students will engage sacred texts from multiple faith traditions to understand how religious spaces are viewed spiritually and ethically, and will also study real estate fundamentals relevant to ministry. The course empowers future faith leaders to manage sacred property in ways that are theologically sound, financially sustainable, and community-minded.

Course Objectives

Students will:

- Analyze sacred texts and multifaith teachings on hospitality, sanctity, and community use of religious space.
- Understand fundamental real estate principles and how they apply to ministry.
- Evaluate the roles of stewardship, sustainability, and justice in space management.
- Assess real-life cases of sacred space sharing and community property use.
- Identify legal, financial, and ethical implications of property ownership.
- Create strategic and theological frameworks for the shared and sustainable use of religious spaces.
- Engage religious, civic, and real estate professionals through roundtable dialogue.

Weekly Topics & Assignments

Unit I: Sacred Space, Hospitality, and Theology (Weeks 1–4)

Week 1: Sacred Space Across Traditions

Indigenous Lens

Indigenous theologies understand land not as possession but as relation—kin, ancestor, and living partner. This provides an opening contrast to Western sacred space frameworks and prepares students to explore how sacredness emerges from relationships of care rather than control.

Reflective Question: 'What if land is not owned but related to?'

Sacred texts on space and hospitality

Readings: Exodus 25:8, Qur'an 72:18, Upanishads, Dhammapada

Assignment: *Reflection Journal #1

Week 2: Theology of Land and Property Stewardship

Indigenous Theologies of Land

Indigenous land theologies challenge Western assumptions of ownership by framing land as shared responsibility. Texts from Willie James Jennings, Kaitlin Curtice, George

Tinker, and Andrea Smith offer alternative visions where land is understood through reciprocity, stewardship, and community rather than extractive control.

Biblical and interfaith views on land and ownership

Readings: 1 Kings 8:22–61, Theologies of Land

Assignment: Exegetical Paper Proposal

Week 3: Comparative Scriptural Study Seminar

Indigenous Hermeneutics

Indigenous hermeneutics invite students to read sacred texts without assuming land ownership as default. Interpretation centers relationality, kinship, and responsibility to place.

Workshop on sacred space themes in texts

Assignment: Exegetical Paper Due

Week 4: Real Estate 101 for Ministry

Ownership types, market basics, church real estate overview

Readings: Jacobus, Real Estate Principles (Ch. 1–3)

Assignment: *Reflection Journal #2

Unit II: Shared Space in Real Life: Ethics, Finance, Community (Weeks 5–9)

Week 5: Multifaith Case Studies of Shared Spaces

Additional Focus: Welcoming the Stranger – Theology of Hospitality in Shared Sacred Space. This module invites reflection on hospitality, inclusion, and community use as expressions of lived faith.

Churches hosting mosques, Sikh Langar, interfaith centers

Readings: Drescher article, Hadith on benefit to others

Assignment: Case Study Analysis (2–3 pages)

Week 6: Ministry Real Estate and Financing

Buying, selling, leasing; mission-aligned financing

Readings: Jacobus (Ch. 5–6); Gone for Good? selections

Midterm: Real Estate Strategy Proposal Outline

Week 7: Zoning, Law, and Property Ethics

Workshop: Finance and Law in Practice – Tools for Sustainable Stewardship. Students will develop sample budgets comparing sale, lease, and development options, and explore Independent Physical Needs Assessments (IPNAs), maintenance planning, and legal frameworks.

Ethics Consideration: Indigenous Critiques of Zoning

Zoning and land-use laws historically reflect colonial frameworks. Indigenous perspectives expose how these systems often disconnect land from spiritual, communal, and ecological well-being.

Zoning, tax exemptions, legal risks

Readings: Blankinship article; Guide to Church Property Use

Assignment: Reflection Journal #3

Week 8: Stewardship Meets Community Development

Community Engagement, Gentrification, and Justice. This expanded unit suggests recommendations to include real-world NYC for community based case studies, faith-based responses to displacement, and conflict resolution strategies for community partnership.

Indigenous Displacement & Gentrification

Modern displacement mirrors historical patterns of Indigenous land loss. Churches must understand their role in either resisting or perpetuating these legacies when considering land use.

Community buy-in, affordable housing, partnerships

Readings: Donna Schaper on churches & neighborhoods

Workshop: Framework for community needs assessment

Week 9: Real Estate & Ministry Roundtable

Guest panel: 2 clergy, 2 developers, 2 realtors, 2 congregants

Group reflection and planning for final project

Unit III: Constructive Theology & Final Project Development (Weeks 10–14)

Week 10: Sacred Space Policy Writing

Indigenous Lens

Indigenous theologies understand land not as possession but as relation—kin, ancestor, and living partner. This provides an opening contrast to Western sacred space frameworks and prepares students to explore how sacredness emerges from relationships of care rather than control.

Reflective Question: 'What if land is not owned but related to?'

Create theological/ethical shared-use policy drafts

Workshop: Peer feedback & edits

Week 11: Investment, Sustainability, and Sacred Trust

Reflective Question: 'What if land is not owned but related to?'

Regenerative Real Estate

Regenerative real estate draws from Indigenous stewardship models which emphasize ecological reciprocity, long-term sustainability, and communal benefit over extraction or profit.

Rental income, ethical investing, long-term viability

Readings: Jacobus (Ch. 10–11), Faith-Based Management

Assignment: Policy Draft for Final Project

Week 12: Final Presentations: Shared Space & Real Estate Strategy

Reflective Question: 'What if land is not owned but related to?'

Present draft policies or proposals for feedback

Group and individual feedback

Week 13: Integration & Reflection

Reflective Question: 'What if land is not owned but related to?'

What does sacred stewardship mean in 21st century ministry?

Assignment: *Final Reflection Journal #4

Week 14: Final Submission & Course Closing

Reflective Question: 'What if land is not owned but related to?'

Final Project Due: Sacred Space Strategy or Policy (8–10 pages or presentation)

Final circle: key learnings and takeaways

Assignments & Grading

Component	Weight
Exegetical Paper	15%
Reflection Journals (4 total)	15%
Class Participation & Roundtable	20%
Midterm Proposal (Real Estate Strategy)	20%
Final Project (Shared Sacred Space Policy)	30%

Optional Extensions

Site visit to interfaith or community-shared sacred site

Advanced research paper on liturgical theology and architecture

Organize a campus/community sacred space forum

Course Policies

Attendance and engagement are required for seminar-style learning.

Assignments must be submitted on time; extensions only with approval.

Integrity and respectful interfaith/intercultural dialogue are expected at all times.

Appendix A: Reflection Journal Template

Course: Sacred Space and Stewardship: Multifaith Ethics and Real Estate for Ministry

Instructor: [Insert Name]

Student Name: _____

Semester: _____

Purpose of the Reflection Journal

This journal invites students to synthesize theological, ethical, and real estate concepts through personal reflection. It is a space for critical engagement with sacred texts, multifaith perspectives, and real-life case studies. You are encouraged to reflect honestly, challenge inherited traditions, and dream prophetically.

Each entry should be approximately 500–750 words, unless otherwise instructed. Journals will be evaluated on depth of insight, theological engagement, self-reflection, and clarity—not on conformity of opinion.

Weekly Reflection Entries

Week 1 – Sacred Space Across Traditions

Indigenous Lens

Indigenous theologies understand land not as possession but as relation—kin, ancestor, and living partner. This provides an opening contrast to Western sacred space frameworks and prepares students to explore how sacredness emerges from relationships of care rather than control.

Reflective Question:

“What if land is not owned but related to?”

Prompt:

How does your faith tradition understand “sacred space”? Where have you personally experienced sacred presence—expected or unexpected?

Challenge:

In what ways has your tradition confined or expanded the meaning of sacredness? How does this shape your views on property, inclusion, or public life?

Reflection:

[Write below or attach additional page]

Week 4 – Real Estate 101 for Ministry

Prompt:

How do real estate fundamentals (ownership, leasing, stewardship) affect ministry in your context? What surprised or challenged you from this week's reading?

Challenge:

Does your community's theology align with how property is actually used or funded?
How might financial realities limit or liberate sacred mission?

Reflection:

[Write below or attach additional page]

Week 7 – Zoning, Law, and Property Ethics

Ethical Insert: Indigenous Critiques of Zoning

Zoning and land-use laws historically reflect colonial frameworks. Indigenous perspectives expose how these systems often disconnect land from spiritual, communal, and ecological well-being.

Prompt:

Reflect on how civic law (zoning, tax codes, liability) intersects with sacred responsibility. What ethical tensions emerge?

Challenge:

How has your faith tradition either benefited from or resisted legal privileges? Where is there a need for prophetic confrontation or courageous compliance?

Reflection:

[Write below or attach additional page]

Week 13 – Integration and Sacred Stewardship

Reflective Question:

“What if land is not owned but related to?”

Prompt:

What has changed in your understanding of sacred space, stewardship, and real estate?

What vision do you carry forward for sacred property and public good?

Challenge:

What traditions or habits in your community need reformation in light of this learning?

What role will you play in that transformation?

Reflection:

[Write below or attach additional page]

Optional Journal Entry – Site Visit or Community Observation

Prompt:

Visit a sacred site, community center, or shared-use space. What values shape how the space is used? How does theology show up in practice?

Challenge:

Where did you see tension between use and meaning? What might your tradition learn from this space?

Reflection:

[Write below or attach additional page]

Submission Guidelines

Submit journal entries as a compiled PDF or printed packet in Weeks 4, 7, and 13.

Indicate if any entry is for instructor feedback only (confidentiality will be respected).

You may include poetry, images, prayers, or diagrams as part of your reflection.

Final Project Requirement Insert

All final projects must include an analysis of how Indigenous land ethics complicate or reshape the congregation's approach to property, ownership, leasing, or mission-space alignment.

Students should address:

“How do Indigenous theologies challenge my community's assumptions about land?”

Appendix A Reflection Prompt Insert (Instructor Discretion)

Additional prompt for Weeks 1–2:

“How does the concept of land as kin or ancestor challenge your tradition's view of sacred space?”

“Whose land are you on, and how is this acknowledged or erased in your congregation?”

Required & Selected Readings

Core Theological and Interfaith Frameworks

Eck, Diana L. *Encountering God: A Spiritual Journey from Bozeman to Banaras*. Beacon Press, 1993.

Patel, Eboo. *Out of Many Faiths: Religious Diversity and the American Promise*. Princeton University Press, 2012.

Sacks, Jonathan. *The Dignity of Difference: How to Avoid the Clash of Civilizations*. Revised edition, Bloomsbury Continuum, 2003. Selected chapters.

Yeo, Khiok-Khng, and Stephen C. Greene, editors. *Theologies of Land: Contested Land, Spatial Justice, and Identity*. Fortress Press, 2021. Selected chapters.

Applied Leadership, Property, and Institutional Stewardship

Elsdon, Mark, editor. *Gone for Good? Negotiating the Coming Wave of Church Property Transition*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2024.

Jacobus, Charles J. *Real Estate Principles*. 14th ed., Cengage Learning, 2016. Selected sections.

Cafferky, Michael E. *Management: A Faith-Based Perspective*. Pearson, 2015. Selected chapters.

Guide to the Utilization of Church Property. Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts, n.d.

Sacred and Classical Sources (Selected Excerpts)

Selected Sacred Texts. Excerpts drawn from the *Hebrew Bible*, *New Testament*, *Qur'an*, *Upanishads*, *Dhammapada*, and *Guru Granth Sahib*.

These texts are engaged comparatively and analytically, with attention to themes of land, stewardship, ethics, community responsibility, and institutional presence. Readings are contextual, non-confessional, and oriented toward public leadership and ethical discernment.

Additional Resources from Bricks & Mortals

[How-To Guides on Property Management, Maintenance, Funding, and Grants](#)

Rationale for Text Selection

The selected texts support the formation of religious leaders equipped to navigate complex questions of institutional sustainability, shared space, and public responsibility in a changing religious landscape. Foundational works in interfaith engagement and social ethics provide frameworks for understanding difference, community, and moral accountability, while applied leadership and property-focused texts address the real-world challenges leaders face in stewarding land, buildings, and organizational resources. Selected sacred texts are engaged comparatively to cultivate ethical imagination, interpretive skill, and reflective discernment across traditions. Together, these readings foster practical wisdom, adaptive leadership, and a values-centered approach to institutional decision-making in service of communities and the common good.

*Appendix A: Reflection Journal Template