"The mission of Tyndale Seminary is to provide Christ-centred graduate theological education for leaders in the church and society whose lives are marked by intellectual maturity, spiritual vigour and moral integrity, and whose witness will faithfully engage culture with the Gospel."

Course	**BUILDING THE CHURCH THROUGH SMALL GROUPS** CHED 0663 NP / PAST 0644 NP / SPIR 0644 NP
Date, Time, and Delivery Format	JANUARY 6 – 10, 2025 MONDAY – FRIDAY, 9:00AM – 4:00PM IN-PERSON ONLY
Instructor	**W. DEAN BURSEY, EdD** Email: dbursey@tyndale.ca **URIAH POND, EdD** Email: upond@tyndale.ca
Class Information	The classes will be in-person from Monday to Friday from 9:00am to 4:00pm each day. In addition to varied instructional activities, each day will include activities reflecting a small group experience.
Course Material	Access course material at classes.tyndale.ca or other services at Tyndale One. Course emails will be sent to your @MyTyndale.ca e-mail account only.

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course explores the basic principles for building and understanding the dynamics and problems of small groups. Specific attention will focus on leadership.

II. LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. Examine the importance of small groups and of small group leaders to building community within the congregation, including how small groups align with one's philosophy of ministry, in a reflective paper.

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2. Assess the role of small groups and small group leaders on the following, through in-class discussions and reflection:

- o Biblical literacy,
- o Spiritual formation,
- o Pastoral care, and
- o Integration of diverse ministries within a congregation

3. Identify and critique the creation and use of small groups, and the development of lay leadership in the local congregation, through readings and discussion.

4. Co-author a handbook for training small group leaders.

III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. REQUIRED READING

Bennett, Diana C. *Renewing your Church through Healthy Small Groups*. Lexington: LTI Publications, 2016.

Donahue, Bill and Russ Robinson. *Building a Life-Changing Small Group Ministry*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012.

Hawkins, Greg L. and Cally Parkinson. *Move: What 1000 Churches Reveal about Spiritual Growth*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011.

Webb, Heather. *Small Group Leadership as Spiritual Direction: Practical Ways to Blend an Ancient Art into your Contemporary Community*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005.

B. SUPPLEMENTARY / RECOMMENDED READING AND TOOLS

Tyndale recommends www.stepbible.org – a free and reputable online resource developed by Tyndale House (Cambridge, England) – for word searches of original-language texts, as well as for topical searches, interlinear texts, dictionaries, etc. Refer to the library for other online resources for Biblical Studies.

C. GUIDELINES FOR INTERACTIONS

Tyndale University prides itself in being a trans-denominational community. We anticipate our students to have varied viewpoints which will enrich the discussions in our learning community. Therefore, we ask our students to be charitable and respectful in their interactions with each other, and to remain focused on the topic of discussion, out of respect to others who have

committed to being a part of this learning community. Please refer to "Guidelines for Interactions" on your course resource page at classes.tyndale.ca.

D. ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

1. **Book Review: 30%**

   Read the four required textbooks, and provide a one-page critique of each, focusing particularly on one critical issue as it relates to small groups. This assignment is related to Outcome #3.
   Basis of grade: This grade will reflect engagement with the textbooks and scholarly critique of an issue discussed in each book. The paper should demonstrate understanding of the issue. It should argue a position clearly and concisely. Simply repeating textbook content without critical debate will lower this grade.

   Due: February 14, 2025

2. **Reflective Paper: 20%**

   Write a 3-page paper on your philosophy of ministry and how small groups fit within your philosophy. This assignment is related to Outcome #1.

   Basis of grade: This grade will reflect the integration of small groups into the student's approach to ministry. The paper should clearly and concisely articulate a philosophy of ministry and illustrate how small groups may be integrated. It should demonstrate an understanding of the course content. Simply making general comments about ministry and small groups without any contextual integration will lower this grade.

   Due: February 21, 2025

3. **Major Project - Handbook: 50%**

   With your 'small group', complete **one** section of the 'Handbook for Training Small Group Leaders', reflecting careful thinking and the scholarly literature you have examined. Your group will contribute one section to the handbook, which is to be written in such a manner that it could be used as a training workbook without further development. You are encouraged to collaborate with other groups on the overall design of the handbook to reflect good instructional pedagogy, and to be creative and complete in handbook content. This assignment is related to Outcome #4.
   (Further details and a Handbook outline will be provided in class.)

Basis of grade: This grade will reflect engagement with course materials and other scholarly literature to contribute to the handbook. The paper should demonstrate understanding of the course materials and other scholarly literature. It should show evidence that all individuals in your 'small group' have contributed to your section, and that the small groups have collaborated to make the handbook cohesive and complete. Simply repeating course or other content without critical adaptation to context will lower this grade.

Due: March 07, 2025

GRADING RUBRIC for written work

Criteria	Excellent (A+ to A)	Very Good (A- to B)	Acceptable (B- to C+)	Fair (C or below)
Completeness	• Addresses the topic clearly and directly • Comprehensive response • Submitted on time	• Addresses the topic clearly and directly • Somewhat comprehensive • Submitted on time	• Addresses some parts of the topic • Incomplete in some manner • Lateness	• Misunderstands the topic • Incomplete or irrelevant to course material and supporting resources
Clarity and Specificity	• Clear and concise • Grammatically correct • Rare grammatical or spelling errors • Includes introduction and conclusion • Presents a logical sequence of thought • Moves beyond generalities to specific arguments and illustrations	• Clear, but can be more concise or precise • A few grammatical or spelling errors • Generally follows a logical sequence from paragraph to paragraph, but may be lacking in detail or specificity	• Somewhat clear, but with significant number of errors in spelling and grammar • Too general • Lacks logical cohesion	• Unclear • Poor spelling and grammar • Makes over-generalized assumptions
Critical engagement with class material and scholarly resources; shows integration with lectures, readings and life	• Thoughtful • Opinions and ideas are substantiated with class material and other scholarly resources • Active reflection • Helpful questioning • Obvious integration with one's ministry context	• Thoughtful • Opinions and ideas are occasionally substantiated with class material and other scholarly resources • Some reflection • Some integration with one's ministry context	• Less thoughtful • Opinions and ideas are sometimes substantiated with class material, but lacks use of other scholarly resources • Insufficient reflection	• Opinions and ideas are not substantiated with class material or other scholarly resources • No reflection • No integration with one's ministry context

			• Less integration with one's ministry context	
Style and quality of responses	• Written in an engaging, scholarly manner • Appropriate and accurate style in footnotes and bibliography	• Written in an interesting manner • Some mistakes or omissions in footnotes and bibliography	• Harder to follow writing that is less engaging • Many mistakes and/or omissions in footnotes and bibliography	• Difficult to read and follow the train of thought • Lacking in scholarship • Footnotes or bibliography are lacking

Turnitin Text-Matching Software

Tyndale has a subscription to text-matching software called Turnitin. This software is used to ensure the originality of academic writing and to check that all of the sources used have been cited correctly. The instructor for this course will be using this software for the assignments that are submitted through your course resource page at classes.tyndale.ca. When you submit your assignment, you will see a summary of your submission, which includes the file(s) that you submitted as well as a similarity report generated by Turnitin.

Below are some useful resources:
- Student Guides for Turnitin via classes.tyndale.ca course resource page
- Interpreting Similarity (Guide, Video, Spectrum)

E. EQUITY OF ACCESS

Students with permanent or temporary disabilities who need academic accommodations must contact the Accessibility Services at the Centre for Academic Excellence to register and discuss their specific needs. *New students* must self-identify and register with the Accessibility Office at the beginning of the semester or as early as possible to access appropriate services. *Current students* must renew their plans as early as possible to have active accommodations in place.

F. SUMMARY OF ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Evaluation is based upon the completion of the following assignments:

Required Reading and Book Review	30 %
Reflective Paper	20 %
Major Project - Handbook	50 %
Total Grade	100 %

G. GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR THE SUBMISSION OF WRITTEN WORK

Your work should demonstrate the following characteristics:

For proper citation style, consult the [tip sheet, "Documenting Chicago Style"](#) (Tyndale e-resource) or the full edition of the [Chicago Manual of Style Online](#), especially ch. 14. For citing scripture texts, refer to sections 10.44 to 10.48 and 14.238 to 14.241 from the Chicago Manual of Style or reference the [tip sheet, "Citing Sources in Theology"](#).

Academic Integrity
Integrity in academic work is required of all our students. Academic dishonesty is any breach of this integrity, and includes such practices as cheating (the use of unauthorized material on tests and examinations), submitting the same work for different classes without permission of the instructors; using false information (including false references to secondary sources) in an assignment; improper or unacknowledged collaboration with other students, and plagiarism (including improper use of artificial intelligence programs). Tyndale University takes seriously its responsibility to uphold academic integrity, and to penalize academic dishonesty. Please refer to the [Academic Integrity website](#) for further details.

Students are encouraged to consult [Writing Services](#). Citation and other [tip sheets](#).

Students should also consult the current *[Academic Calendar](#)* for academic polices on Academic Honesty, Gender Inclusive Language in Written Assignments, Late Papers and Extensions, Return of Assignments, and Grading System.

Research Ethics
All course-based assignments involving human participants requires ethical review and may require approval by the [Tyndale Research Ethics Board (REB)](#). Check with the Seminary Dean's Office (aau@tyndale.ca) before proceeding.

H. COURSE EVALUATION

Tyndale Seminary values quality in the courses it offers its students. End-of-course evaluations provide valuable student feedback and are one of the ways that Tyndale Seminary works towards maintaining and improving the quality of courses and the student's learning experience. Student involvement in this process is critical to enhance the general quality of teaching and learning.

Before the end of the course, students will receive a MyTyndale email with a link to the online course evaluation. The link can also be found in the left column on the course page. The evaluation period is 2 weeks; after the evaluation period has ended, it cannot be reopened.

Course Evaluation results will not be disclosed to the instructor before final grades in the course have been submitted and processed. Student names will be kept confidential and the instructor will only see the aggregated results of the class.

IV. COURSE SCHEDULE, CONTENT AND REQUIRED READINGS

The tentative course schedule is provided below. However, adjustments may be made to accommodate in-class discussions and activities.

Day 1
- Purpose of small groups, including their role in discipleship through Christian education, pastoral care, and building community
- Design and administration of a small group ministry within a congregation

Day 2
- Curriculum for small group ministry, including worship, prayer, teaching, pastoral care, and service

Day 3
- The nature of groups, including life-cycle, group dynamics, etc.
- Discipleship and evangelism through small groups

Day 4
- Facilitating small group meetings, including conflict resolution

Day 5
- Small group leader training
- Coaching

V. SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

(Tyndale Library supports this course with e-journals, e-books, and the mail delivery of books and circulating materials. See the Library FAQ page.)

Arnold, Jeffrey. *The Big Book on Small Groups*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2004.

Astley, Jeff. *Ordinary Theology: Looking, Listening and Learning in Theology*. London: Routledge, 2002.

Bennett, Diana C. *Renewing your Church through Healthy Small Groups*. Lexington: LTI Publications, 2016.

Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *Life Together: The Classic Exploration of Christian Community*. New York: HarperCollins, 1978.

Cloud, Henry and John Townsend. *Making Small Groups Work: What Every Small Group Leader Needs to Know*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003.

Donahue, Bill and Russ Robinson. *Building a Life-Changing Small Group Ministry*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012.

Donahue, Bill. *Leading Life-Changing Small Groups*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996.

Donahue, Bill and Greg Bowman. *Coaching Life-Changing Small Group Leaders*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 2012.

Estep, James R. and Jonathan H. Kim. *Christian Formation: Integrating Theology and Human Development*. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010.

Everist, Norma Cook. *The Church as Learning Community: A Comprehensive Guide to Christian Education*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2002.

Fisher, Roger and William Ury. *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement without Giving In*, 2nd ed. Toronto: Penguin Books, 1991.

Ford, David G., Joshua L Mann and Peter M. Phillips. *The Bible and Digital Millennials*. London: Routledge, 2019.

Gladen, Steve. *Leading Small Groups with Purpose: Everything You Need to Lead a Healthy Group*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2012.

George, Carl F. *Nine Keys to Effective Small Group Leadership*. Mansfield: Kingdom Publishing, 1997.

Hartwig, Ryan T., Courtney W. Davis, and Jason A. Sniff. *Leading Small Groups that Thrive: Five Shifts to Take Your Group to the Next Level*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020.

Illeris, Knud. *How We Learn: Learning and Non-learning in School and Beyond*, 2nd ed. London: Routledge, 2017.

Oliver, Eddie, *Inspiring Connection: Small Groups where Everyone Matters*. Life-Giving Conversations Press, 2019.

Ott, Craig. *Teaching and Learning Across Cultures: A Guide to Theory and Practice*. Grand Rapids: MI: Baker Academic, 2021.

Search, Bill. *The Essential Guide for Small Group Leaders*. Carol Stream: Christianity Today, 2017.

Stone, Douglas, Bruce Patton, and Sheila Heen. *Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most*. Toronto: Viking, 1999.

Webb, Heather. *Small Group Leadership as Spiritual Direction: Practical Ways to Blend an Ancient Art into your Contemporary Community*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005.

Werntz, Myles. *From Isolation to Community: A Renewed Vision for Christian Life Together*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2022.

White, Allen. *Leading Healthy Groups: A Guide for Small Group Leaders*. Allen White Consulting, Inc, 2018.