Course: ***Latina/o Churches in their Social Context: Methods in Congregational Studies***

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(Advanced level)

This course will introduce students to an overview of the **methods for congregational studies,** directing focus on Latina/o congregations. Emphasis will be mainly on the socio-historical context of Latina/o churches within the U.S. context. Theological and sociological implications of ecological, economic, cultural, political, denominationalism and pluralistic religious realities will be examined. The impact of these different variables and how they transform, challenge and influence Latina/o churches will be examined. The role of leadership and its diverse styles, as well as the variables of theological training, race, gender and sexuality will be included among different aspects of Latina/o church life that will be discussed. Also explored will be the impact and influence Latina/o churches have upon their surrounding local and national communities, including whether Latina/o churches have or can be agents of oppression, alienation or sites of liberation and freedom. Students will approach the subject through reading interpretive essays about congregations in the U.S. as well as ethnographic studies regarding specific congregations.