

D. MIN. SEMINAR III

The Minister as Theological Interpreter

Seminar Description

Due date for of writing assignments: Tuesday, December 30

By email to both instructors: kjohnson@lpts.edu; jcarroll61@me.com

General Course Description

This seminar will engage students in theological reflection on their practice of ministry, with a particular focus on ministry in relation to Christian spirituality. Attention will be paid both to the complex mutual dependences of spirituality and theological reflection in ministry and to a range of questions arising within the emerging discipline of spirituality studies.

As with any Seminar III topic, the questions posed by this focus are intertwined with central affirmations of Christian faith – touching on creation, theological anthropology, Christology, trinity, suffering, and ethical engagement, to name only some. Ministry draws upon intentional and developing spiritual practices, both communal and individual, and requires also the ability to respond with appreciation, empathy and sometimes challenge to persons and communities of a wide variety of spiritualities.

General Expectations for Preparation:

- I. Continue to reflect on your pastoral identity and the context in which you practice. This involves further thinking about the readings and reflections from Seminars I and II.
- II. Advance your planning toward your Learning Project, in preparation for a conference with the Director of the D.Min. program while you are on campus.
- III. Explore matters of Christian spirituality in relation to your vocations and ministry settings.
 - A. By completing the assigned reading, as described below.
 - B. By completing the assigned writing tasks, designed to help you, as a theological interpreter, bring together your work of ministry and the perspectives of the study of spirituality.
 - C. By taking leadership, as agreed, for class discussions.
- IV. Prepare for leading a brief time of opening worship and devotion on one of our days.

Assignments for Seminar III

You will want to have completed the reading before our intense seminar begins. Consult the schedule for the week to see when we will discuss each of the readings.

Reading:

Books

Cunningham, Lawrence, ed. *Thomas Merton, Spiritual Master*. Paulist Press, 1992.

ISBN: 0809133148.

Use Cunningham's introductory material to guide your browsing through the volume. At least have a good look at these texts:

Glance quickly at excerpt from *The Seven Storey Mountain*, pp. 63-106.

Lightly read "Fire Watch, July 4, 1952," pp. 107-120 (& compare with "Day of a Stranger").

Read: "Day of a Stranger," pp. 214-22

"Hagia Sophia," pp. 257-264

"Contemplation in a World of Action," pp. 368-376

"Rain and the Rhinoceros" pp. 389-398.

Glance at the excerpts from *The Wisdom of the Desert*, pp. 265-279 and "A Christian Looks at Zen," p. 399-421.

Ford, David F. and Susan Howatch. *The Shape of Living: Spiritual Directions for Everyday Life*, 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004.

ISBN: 9780801065194.

Lischer, Richard Lischer. *Stations of the Heart: Parting with a Son*.

New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013). ISBN: 0307960536.

(Read this in conjunction with a review of Amy Plantinga Pauw, "Dying Well," in *Practicing our Faith*, ed. Dorothy C. Bass (Jossey-Bass, 1997), 163-77.

Robinson, Marilynne. *Gilead: A Novel*. New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 2004.

ISBN: 9780374153892.

Sheldrake, Philip. *Spirituality and Theology: Christian Living and the Doctrine of God* Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998. ISBN: 1570752249.

¹Valente, Judith, Brother Paul Quenon, Michael Bever. *The Art of Pausing*.

Chicago, IL: ACTA Publications, 2013. ISBN 978-087946509.

Williams, Rowan. *The Wound of Knowledge: Christian Spirituality from the New Testament to John of the Cross*, 2nd ed. Lanham, MD: Cowley Publications, 1990. ISBN: 1561010472.

¹ Recommended

Articles and chapters, to be made available on the LPTS CAMS:

Burrows, Mark S. and Elizabeth A. Dreyer, eds. *Minding the Spirit: The Study of Christian Spirituality*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005. ISBN 0801880777

Preface, xi-xvii

Chapter 1 – Sandra Schneiders, “The Study of Spirituality: Contours and Dynamics of a Discipline,” 5-24.

Chapter 11 – J. Matthew Ashley, “The Turn to Spirituality? The Relationship between Theology & Spirituality,” 159-170.

Chapter 21 - Philip Sheldrake, “Christian Spirituality as a Way of Living Publicly: A Dialectic of the Mystical & Prophetic,” 282-298.

Dreyer, Elizabeth, “Christian Spirituality” in Richard McBrien, ed., *The HarperCollins Encyclopedia of Catholicism*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1995, 1216-20. ISBN: 0060653388.

Edward Farley. *Practicing Gospel: Unconventional Thoughts on the Church’s Ministry*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003. ISBN: 0664224989].)

Chapters 1 & 3, pp. 3-13, 29-43.

(This book will appear again in Seminar IV; you might want to acquire it!)

Johnson, Elizabeth, “Trinity: To Let the Symbol Sing Again,” *Theology Today* 54.3 (1997), 299-311.

And one more book or other resource, of your own choosing:

There are undoubtedly resources which have shaped your own approaches to Christian spirituality: these could include books, of course, but also works of music or the visual arts, perhaps a film or play. See Assignment II.B below for the role of this resource in the seminar.

Writing and Preparing for our Seminar Sessions:

I. Prepare for discussion of the common readings:

Write 75 well-chosen words on each required reading; where appropriate, include the question arising from that reading which you would most like to be part of our class discussion.

As you prepare, provide a heading for each with the name of the author clearly indicated; compile these responses into a single document, “Readings, YOUR NAME” (e.g. Readings, Jonathan) so that we can easily share these responses with the cohort.

During the seminar, be prepared to lead the discussion on any of the readings, responding not only to your own questions but to those of others.

(We will contact people a few days in advance for the first day’s discussions; for leading discussion in later sessions assignments will be agreed on during the seminar.)

II. Try your hand at a number of forms of writing which engage your own theological understandings, your creativity, and your practice of Christian spirituality as they relate to your ministry. While the intention here is not to parade your theological knowledge, approach all these tasks through the lens of this seminar: you as “theological interpreter,” attentive to God’s presence and call.

A. Try, in a couple of sentences or a brief paragraph, to capture your own understanding of Christian spirituality. (Resources from *Minding the Spirit* may be particularly helpful here, but each of our readings speaks to this topic.)

We will use these distillations to help begin our discussion, and then on the last day we will talk about where these understandings have remained helpful and where they have been changed.

B. For the book or other resource which you choose as your particular selection, write about 500 words to introduce the resource and describe its significance for you.

In choosing your resource, think about its relationship with the other forms of self-reflection you are preparing. (Of course, one form of this relationship may be complementarity or even tension!)

C. Experiment with two forms of personal spiritual narrative:

1. A condensed “spiritual autobiography” (about 10 pages)

This could take a number of forms, of course: you may discover anew how important continuity and nurture have been in your life, for example, or how significant were times of struggle and re-direction (or both!). In any case, include reflection on the importance of both relations to the divine and to yourself, and also relations with other persons and communities. If your formation within a particular tradition is significant for your ministry (as it likely is!), then describe how the resources of this tradition have become part of your life and, if appropriate, where you struggle with them.

2. A particular incident or aspect of that history (about 3 pp.)

Again, this could take a number of forms. You could focus on a particular practice which has been especially formative for you; you could look back on a particular strand or even incident or strand in your experience which you now understand in a different light and reflect on that change in perspective. Or ...

D. Try something else!

If you enjoyed *The Art of Pausing*, you might want to experiment with haiku: select two or three of your efforts for us to savor. Or try another form of poetry, or song composition, or painting, or another form that expresses your creativity.

Since this will be part of your presentation time for our seminar, be sure you have prepared something that can be shared with the cohort.

E. Finally, and crucially: provide a thick description (about 4-5 pp.) of an incident in the practice of your ministry which you are approaching from the standpoint of reflection on Christian spirituality.

You have undoubtedly presented such examples of ministry practice in a number of settings. In choosing and shaping this one, ask yourself, “What differences does it make to view this slice of my vocational life through the lenses of spirituality?”

III. Prepare a brief (about 4 pp.) description of the issue or question in ministry that you want to approach with your Project. As part of this description, identify a major work of a recognized theologian, contemporary or historical, with whom you want to be in dialogue as you develop the theological reflection aspects of your project.

This description will be helpful not only for your conversation with the D.Min. director but also for your presentation and discussion with the cohort.

LPTS academic policies:

As with all LPTS classes, this course will honor these Seminary policies:

Use of Inclusive Language

In accordance with seminary policy, students are to use inclusive language in class discussions and in written and oral communication by using language representative of the whole human community in respect to gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, and physical and intellectual capacities. For more information see:

<http://lpts.libguides.com/content.php?pid=469569&sid=4083885>

Direct quotations from theological texts and translations of the Bible do not have to be altered to conform to this policy. In your own writing, however, when referring to God, you are encouraged to use a variety of images and metaphors, reflecting the richness of the Bible's images for God.

Academic Honesty

All work turned in to the instructors is expected to be the work of the student whose name appears on the assignment. Any borrowing of the ideas or the words of others must be acknowledged by quotation marks (where appropriate) and by citation of author and source. Use of another's language or ideas from online resources is included in this policy, and must be attributed to author and source of the work being cited. Failure to do so constitutes plagiarism, and may result in failure of the course. Two occurrences of plagiarism may result in dismissal from the Seminary. Students unfamiliar with issues related to academic honesty can find help from the staff in the Academic Support Center. For more information, see The Code of Student Conduct, 6.11; the Student Handbook, p. 19.

Citation Policy

Citations in your papers should follow the Seminary standard, which is based on these guides:

American Psychological Association. *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*. 6th ed. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2010.

Turabian, Kate L., Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers*. 8th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013.

The Chicago Manual of Style. 16th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010.

Copies of these guides are available at the library and in the Academic Support Center.

Special Accommodations

Students requiring accommodations for a documented physical or learning disability should be in contact with the Director of the Academic Support Center (kmapes@lpts.edu) during the first two days of class (or, even better, before the class begins) and should speak with the instructors as soon as possible to arrange appropriate adjustments. Students with environmental or other sensitivities that may affect their learning are also encouraged to speak with the instructors.

Attendance Policy

According to the Seminary catalog, students are expected to attend class meetings regularly. In case of illness or emergency, students are asked to notify the instructor of their planned absence from class, either prior to the session or within 24 hours of the class session. Absences from more than 1/4 of the course may result in a low or failing grade.

Jc & kj
9.29.2014