

PX 2003/2013 Practical Theology in Congregations

Fall and Spring 2012-2013
Wednesdays, 1:30-3:20 p.m.
Sessions Meet in Schlegel 122

Professor: Dr. Dianne Reistroffer, Rev. Ken Hockenberry, and Rev. Cindy Weber

Credit: Three hours graded academic credit and one unit field education each semester for a total of six hours/two units for the two semesters combined. This is a required course for the M.Div. degree and is ordinarily taken in the second or middler year of seminary.

Course Description: *Practical Theology in Congregations* is a year-long course taken in conjunction with field education placement in a congregation, intentionally combining field-based learning with classroom learning. The course is designed to encourage participants to benefit from the shared wisdom gained from communal reflection on the practice of ministry. In order to discipline this reflection and deepen practice, the course will draw upon various biblical-theological and anthropological resources as well as field-based and life experiences.

Prerequisites: There are no prerequisites; however, supervised, congregation-based field placement is ordinarily required to be **concurrent** with the classroom portion of the course. Additionally, students should have taken the first foundational courses in Bible and Faith Seeking Understanding before enrolling in this course.

Goals: The fundamental goal is for students to gain practical wisdom for the sake of ministry and to introduce students to various frameworks for practical theological interpretation in congregations. The course will focus primarily upon deepening a student's ability to reflect theologically on the practice of ministry in congregational and public contexts, with an emphasis upon the communal nature of a congregation's ministry.

We hope students will begin or deepen their ability to:

- Gain skills in theological reflection on issues of ministry that will enable the student to move faithfully into God's unfolding future;
- Experience the importance of collaborative ministry, reflecting theologically with a community of leaders who are willing to wrestle together on issues of importance to each member of the group;
- Learn to use investigative techniques and to assess theologically and sense intuitively the context, culture, and process of a congregation and use this learning as a basis for choosing ways to work within the congregation;
- Explore processes to help a congregation grow in faithfulness and into a more biblical/theological understanding of what it means to be the church and to be faithful disciples in the world;

- Gain a clearer sense of self as a pastoral/congregational leader;
- Value and cultivate spiritual formation for themselves and others; and,
- See that seminary is only the beginning of learning, gain skills to continue learning throughout their ministry, and plan for regular continuing education.

Teaching Methodology:

For the classroom portion of the course, we will utilize some lecture and large group discussion, as well as small group work, reflective writing and other exercises, presentations from the field settings, case studies, film analysis, and field trips. Field education supervisors will be invited periodically to join some of the class sessions.

Course Requirements and Grading:

Students will be graded by their professor for the classroom portion of the course (for the six hours of academic credit). Field education supervisors will be responsible for evaluation on a pass/fail basis of the field-based portion of the course (for 2 units of field education credit).

Each semester a grade will be given based on the following:

Class Engagement:

Notebook (journal)	40%
Case Studies	20%
Small Group Work	10%
End of the Semester Project	<u>30%</u>
	100%

Other:

- A **passing grade** from the field education setting is mandatory to pass the classroom portion.
- **Attendance and active participation** are assumed. In case of illness or emergency, students are asked to notify the professor of their planned absence from class, either prior to the session or within 24 hours of the class session. Three or more absences for each semester will result in a low or failing grade in the course.

Notebooks

At least weekly students will critically and theologically reflect in their notebook (journal) on

- spiritual disciplines,
- readings,
- class discussions,
- assignments,
- congregational experiences.

The professor will pick up student notebooks for grading purposes on the 5th and 10th class day of each semester (October 10 and November 28 in the fall semester). Two to three typed pages of reflection a week are usually needed to fulfill this requirement. The entries will be considerably longer when a congregational study task is assigned. The grading rubric for the class notebook (journal) is provided in the appendix section of this syllabus.

Case Studies

At least twice each semester students will prepare case studies for review by their group leader and during a designated group meeting, two or three students will present their case study for the entire group. Each student in the group will present one case during the course of the academic year. Dr. Reistroffer will cover the subject of the Ministerial Case Presentation and requirements for case study work in PTC during the sixth session of the course (October 24, 2012). Reference materials will also be distributed in class and through the CAMS course site. (The model case study is used with permission from the student, now a graduate, who produced it.) All case studies – both those presented in group and those that were not – will be evaluated by the student's small group leader.

Final Projects

Each semester will culminate with a final project. The fall project will be a major congregational study based on the student's field education placement. The spring project will be a major integrative paper, based on course readings, discussions, and experiences in the congregation. More detailed instructions about the final project will be given in class, however, the guidelines for the major paper on *Dying, Death, and the Christian/Unitarian Universalist Funeral* (Fall Final Project) appear in the appendix of this syllabus. **The Fall Final Project is due NLT Friday, December 14, 2012, by 5 p.m.**

Textbook List A book or two will be added for the spring semester.

Ammerman, Nancy et al. *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998.

Carroll, Jackson W. *God's Potters: Pastoral Leadership and the Shaping of Congregations*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006.

Craddock, Fred, Goldsmith, Joy, and Goldsmith, Dale. *Speaking of Dying: Recovering the Church's Voice in the Face of Death*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2012.

Long, Thomas G. *Accompany Them With Singing – The Christian Funeral*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009.

Osmer, Richard R. *Practical Theology: An Introduction*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008.

For some class sessions, other readings will be distributed in class or through the CAMS course site.

School and Class Policies

Confidentiality

Professional ethics in ministry helps us understand confidentiality as the trustworthy use of information to assure appropriate care of those who seek our assistance. In other words, confidentiality is not synonymous with keeping a secret (Lebacqz, *Professional Ethics*, 1985). Rather, it is being accountable for honoring another's trust while assuring the best possible care for them. Accountability may warrant consultation when we need further information. This understanding of confidentiality is illustrated in this course by our practice of asking you to develop case material from your ministry settings for consultation with your classmates and the *Practical Theology in Congregations* faculty. However, to do such consultation responsibly, it will be imperative that any identifying information is adequately disguised and the written cases themselves are safeguarded once they are distributed.

Additionally, in this age of social networking, students are reminded that professional ethics in ministry extends to this medium. Postings about confidential pastoral and congregational matters in the field education setting on one's Face Book, MySpace, or other social network sites are simply inappropriate and may become actionable legal, ecclesial, and disciplinary matters. Students are also advised to be careful and prudent about the personal data they share on such sites because, despite the presumption of privacy, these social networks can be shared with third parties, including ordaining bodies, seminary officials, and church authorities.

Statement on Sexual Harassment and Field Education

Preamble: We in theological education at Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary are committed to making our seminary and our churches (field educational settings) safe places for all persons.

Definition of Sexual Harassment:

Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when

1. Submission of such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment or a factor in the evaluation or grade determination of a student's work;
2. Submission to or rejection of such conduct by individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affect that person or a factor in the evaluation or grade determination of a student's work; or
3. Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work or learning performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working or learning environment.

Sexual Harassment and Field Education:

In Supervised Field Education, it is necessary to maintain boundaries in order to avoid role confusion. Many supervisory relationships become the basis of genuine collegial friendship; however, the bringing of sexual behavior, whether verbal or physical, into the supervisory relationship is clearly inappropriate due to the unequal status of the participants. At the same time, it is our hope that students and supervisors will develop a sufficiently trusting relationship so that dialogue about these kinds of issues might take place in supervision.

Both students and supervisors are responsible to Louisville Seminary as well as to their various congregations and denominations for their behavior in this area. Since the student is serving in the congregation as a pastoral intern, the expectation of appropriate pastoral behavior rests with the student. During the tenure of the student's field education placement, it is the policy of the Office of Field Education and Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary that a sexual relationship within the congregation or supervisory setting is incompatible with established ministerial ethics. Furthermore, field education students are expected to maintain appropriate pastoral behavior in conformity with school and/or congregational-denominational guidelines.

Allegations of actions that violate these guidelines should come to the Director of Field Education and will be handled in accordance with the policies and procedures of the Seminary, where applicable. Students may also have recourse to or be subject to the policies and procedures of the field education setting and their denominations.

Classroom Discussion

For ours to be an open classroom where freedom and respect are assured regarding one another's point of view, we need to agree that comments and expressions of belief that may be at variance with those of the instructors, another student, or our own must be respected, heard, and treated fairly. We hope this same attitude prevails in the churches where students serve in ministry and is modeled by our field education students in their church settings.

Use of Inclusive Language

Learning is fundamentally concerned with communication, self-expression, and personal and social transformation. Learning respects individuals, their feelings, their value and worth, and their particular potential for contribution to common knowledge and community virtue. Learning is fundamentally and intentionally inclusive. Since all learning is inherently ethical and political, and theological discourse traditionally has been patriarchal and gender exclusive, the Seminary has established a policy, in the interest of the construction of an inclusive and egalitarian community, that the language (symbols, metaphors) used in our class discussions and written work will be gender inclusive and respectful of all persons and groups as valued human creatures of God.

Racism and white privilege, homophobia, and prejudice toward people with disabilities also permeate our society and are detrimental to any learning environment. We need to use language,

symbols, and metaphors that honor our commitment to being a community respectful and welcoming of difference and opposed to all forms of social oppression.

From the Dean's Office

Attendance

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. Three or more absences for each semester will result in a lower or failing grade in this course.

Plagiarism and Documentation Policy

All students are expected to abide by Seminary policies and expectations concerning student integrity, including academic honesty and avoidance of plagiarism. Louisville Seminary's policy on plagiarism is detailed in the Student Handbook (pp. 19-23), which is available on the Louisville Seminary Intranet or from the Dean of Students Office. Assistance with academic writing is available from Kathy Mapes, Coordinator of the Academic Support Services Center, and Sherry Arconti, Writing Tutor.

Session Topics and Calendar: Fall Semester

The focus for the semester is on the development of a framework for practical theological interpretation in congregations and of an understanding of the context and culture of congregational life and the work and life of pastoral leaders.

Week 1

Assignment for September 12: What Do Clergy Do?

1. Read Jackson Carroll, *God's Potters*, Chapter 3, "Who Are God's Potters Today?," pp. 57-95, and chapter 4, "What do Clergy Do: The Work of Ordained Ministry," pp. 96-126.
2. What in Chapter 3 was a source of encouragement for you? A source of discouragement? What new insights did you gain about the vocation of pastor from this chapter?
3. Chapter 4 is a quintessential example of research in practical theology. Describe a typical week for pastors. On which tasks do they spend the most time and attention? What factors account for differences between pastors in terms of the types and amount of work they do? What do clergy consider to be the core tasks of pastoral ministry? What do lay people consider to be the core tasks of ministry?

September 12 (supervisors present): Introduction to the course, syllabus review, and the supervisory conference (role play)

Possible topics for opening supervisory conferences:

1. Entry Issues

- How do you enter a congregation as the pastor?
2. What do pastors do all week long? What is a typical week and day like? Which of the multitude of tasks you do are
 - Most and least rewarding/fun?
 - Most scary?
 - Greatest challenge?
 - Heaviest load?
 3. How do you manage your time with all these demands?
 4. Story telling about ‘firsts.’
 - First funeral, first sermon, first board meeting, etc.

Week 2

Assignment for September 19: Introduction to Practical Theology

1. Read the Introduction in Richard Osmer’s *Practical Theology*, Introduction, pp. 1-29.
2. Pay careful attention to the opening case; the four tasks of practical theology; the three categories of episode, situation, and context; practical theological interpretation as a bridge concept and its three corollaries; congregational leaders as interpretive guides; the spirituality of congregational leaders; and Christ’s threefold office as part of Osmer’s framework.

September 19: Introduction to the Discipline of Practical Theology and the Osmer Model

Lecture and plenary discussion led by Dr. Dianne Reistroffer

Week 3

Assignment for September 26

Interpreting the **context** of a congregation

1. Read Carroll, *God’s Potters*, Chapter 2, “The Social and Cultural Context in Which Clergy Work,” pp. 31-56.
2. Read *Studying Congregations*, Introduction and Chapter 2, pp. 7-21 and 40-77.
3. Conduct a Space Tour/windshield tour (p. 47ff) by taking a walk/drive through the neighborhood of your church. In your notebook reflect on:
 - What you saw – don’t worry about what it means.
 - What questions did it raise?
 - Where is God in this neighborhood?
 - Bring an artifact from the neighborhood to class next time (something that interprets your neighborhood).

Find out the demographics of your church’s neighborhood. Information on how to find this material is found in Ammerman, pp. 213-216, but the best resource is the online website of the Association of Religion Data Archives (www.thearda.com). Click on the congregational resources link and you will find enormously helpful ways to build a community profile.

September 26: Interpreting the Context of the Congregation: Meet as a Small Group

In small group, students will discuss findings from windshield survey

What difference does your context make to the life of your church and your ministry?

How well is the church attuned to the context?

How has the context shaped the church?

Does your congregation reflect its neighborhood?

Week 4

Assignment for October 3

Interpreting the **culture** of a congregation

1. Read *Studying Congregations*, Chapter 3, pp. 78-104.

2. Congregational Task:

- Gather your Lay Committee for a group interview (approx. 1 hour - Explain that you're doing this as part of a course and you'll share the answers with classmates, teachers, and supervisor.)
- Ask everyone to think of a time/incident or story from the life of this congregation that represents the church at its best. Give everyone 5-10 minutes or so to think and to write down the story.
- Ask each person to share the story they thought and wrote.
- As a whole group, discuss this: What do these stories say about the strengths, values, and culture of this congregation?
- Bring the stories to class (as part of your notebook).

3. Interview four people in your congregation (different from the ones above and of different ages and groups), either orally or they can write their answers to this question.

- Who are the heroes and the heroines of the congregation?
- What are key events (positive and/or negative) in the life of the congregation?
- If this church were a Bible Story, what story would it be? Why?

4. Dudley and Johnson, "Congregational Self-Images," pp. 104-121 in

Carriers of Faith: Lessons from Congregational Studies (CAMS course site).

October 3: Interpreting the Culture of the Congregation – Meet as a Small Group

In small group, students will discuss the following items. All responses to these questions should appear in the student notebook in advance.

Name a story from the life of your congregation that is symbolic of the heart/center of the congregation's culture. What are some ways that this story has shaped/formed the congregation?

Tell the story you heard that you felt had most meaning. What was the Bible story that reflects your congregation. Tell the story that affected you most strongly.

Who are we and what are the ways our culture is reinforced and re-created?

Symbols
Rituals and artifacts
World View
Rules (probably unwritten)
Theological tradition
Social location
Relationship to the outside world
Budget

What themes/patterns emerged from your congregation? Special words?
How is your denominational history reflected in your congregation?
What behavior would be utterly unacceptable in your congregation?
What is the view of God? Humankind? Redemption? Church (ecclesiology)?

How is the Bible used in the congregation? What verses are most frequently quoted?
What verses are found in the church's building? Which book of the Bible is the favorite of the congregation?

Where does the culture reflect or not reflect the context of the neighborhood you explored? Are the congregation's beliefs and behaviors out of place?

What do you need to know about the culture of your congregation to survive in your culture? What clues does the culture give to how you can work for change?

How do stories work?
Why do stories matter?

Week 5

Assignment for October 10:

1. Read Osmer, *Practical Theology*, Chapter 1, "The Descriptive-Empirical Task: Priestly Listening," pp. 31-78.
2. Pay careful attention to the opening and ending of the chapter and the case of Olivia Potter. In this chapter, Osmer discusses in detail what he means by the descriptive-empirical task of practical theological interpretation. It has to do with the quality of attentiveness that congregational leaders give to persons and events in their everyday life. Osmer explores this task in terms of a spirituality of presence, a subject that will be discussed in class, as well as priestly listening, attending, and guiding. We will also consider the types of research that support this task of practical theology. (Hint: You have already done some of this kind of research as part of your congregational studies work.)

October 10: The Descriptive-Empirical Task of Practical Theology
Lecture and plenary discussion led by Dr. Dianne Reistroffer.

Please note: Your notebooks are due this day to the professor.

No Class on October 17 - Research and Study Week

Week 6

Assignment for October 24: The Ministerial Case Presentation

1. Read the Ministerial Case Presentation Guidelines and the Sample Case Study in preparation for class (CAMS course site).
2. Continue work on the fall final project, your congregational study paper.

October 24: The Ministerial Case Presentation

Lecture, discussion, and a case study presentation, based on the movie “Gran Torino” led by Dr. Dianne Reistroffer.

Week 7

Assignment for October 31: First Case Study Presentations in Small Group

1. All students are expected to prepare a written case study dealing with their field education placement. The case should deal with either “a first experience” or an incident (episode) that raises issues pertaining to pastoral identity or pastoral authority.
2. Two students will present their case in their small group on November 8 and are asked to make copies in advance for members of the group.
3. All students will submit their written case studies to the professor at the end of the class.

October 31: First Case Study Presentations – Meet as a Small Group

Week 8

Assignment for November 7: Professional Ethics in Ministry

1. Read Carroll, *God’s Potters*, Chapter 6, “Potters’ Problems: Commitment, Satisfaction, and Health,” pp. 159-187, and William H. Willimon, *Calling and Character*, Chapter 2, “The Character of the Clergy,” pp. 31-59, and Chapter 3, “The Pastor in Community,” pp. 60-93 (CAMS course site).
2. Be familiar with your denomination’s policies on clergy ethics, sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, etc., and bring copies of those policies to class.

November 7 (supervisors present): Sex, Money, Power, and Intellectual Property

A special, two-hour session led by a panel of pastors and professors.

Week 9

Assignment for November 14: Second Case Study Presentations in Small Group

1. All students are expected to prepare a written case study dealing with their field education placement. The case should deal with either a professional ethical matter or an incident (episode) or situation dealing with theological differences.

2. Three students will present their case in their small group on November 22 and are asked to make copies in advance for members of the group.
3. All students will submit their written case studies to the professor at the end of the class.

November 14: Second Case Study Presentations – Meet as a Small Group

There will be no class on November 21 so that students may participate in Thanksgiving services and activities in their congregations.

Week 10

Assignment for November 28: Providing pastoral care to the dying and speaking of death

1. Read Fred Craddock and the Goldsmiths' book, *Speaking of Dying*.
2. Journal about your own experiences with dying and death: in your family, in your circle of friends, and in the congregation where you are serving/have served.
3. How does your congregation speak of death? Give concrete examples.

November 28: Death and Dying: A Didactic

Lecture and discussion led by Ms. Jan Jasperse and Dr. Dianne Reistroffer

Please note that your notebook are due this day to your small group leader.

Week 11

Assignment for December 5: Funerals

1. Read Tom Long's book, *Accompany Them With Singing*.
2. Bring a copy of your church's policies pertaining to funerals (if available) as well as a bulletin from a funeral service you or your pastor has led.
3. Be familiar with your denomination's order of worship for a Christian/Unitarian Universalist funeral.

December 3: Funerals: A Didactic

Lecture, discussion, and practicum led by Rev. Ken Hockenberry and Rev. Cindy Weber.

December 14: The Fall Final Project (Dying, Death, and Funerals) is due by 5 p.m.

The teaching team will post spring topics and assignments just before Christmas 2012.