Practicing Our Faith  
Spring 2017  
T/R, 1:30-2:50 p.m.  
Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary  
Schlegel Hall 121

Faculty:

**Professor Amy Plantinga Pauw**  
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**Professor Bradley Wigger**  
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Course description
In this course we will survey recent literature on Christian practices, focusing on the historical and ecumenical insights this approach to the Christian tradition offers. We will also explore how an emphasis on Christian practices informs contemporary ministry and spirituality, including educational ministries in and beyond congregational settings.

*This course meets a 3-credit area B general elective requirement for MDiv, MA, and MAS students as well as the teaching ministry requirement for the MDiv. Introduction to Theology and Ethics (ITE) is a prerequisite.*

Goals and objectives:
1. Students will gain familiarity with Christian practices in both historical and contemporary settings.

2. Students will demonstrate the ability to relate the study of practices to their own ministry contexts, vocation, and spiritual formation.

3. Students will deepen their understanding and appreciation of the practices of their own religious tradition and to explore points of convergence and difference with other communities and traditions of faith.

4. Students will imagine and reflect upon the role of practices in religious educational settings.

Required Books (also on library reserve):


Resource Books for Teaching Sessions (on overnight reserve):

Additional Reserve Items:

**Other Reserve Items:**

**Videos**


On CAMS

“Apartheid and the Belhar Confession” (PCUSA resource)

Note: full version is available at:


Daneel, Marthinus. “African Earthkeeping Churches”


Plantinga Pauw, Amy. *Church in Ordinary Time* excerpt.

Practicing Our Faith Website: http://www.practicingourfaith.org/


“What are Christian Practices?” available at
http://www.practicingourfaith.org/prct_what_are_practices.html

Wigger, J. Bradley. “Learning as We Teach: Christian education is about Teaching Mysteries,” *The Thoughtful Christian*.


**Course Requirements**

1. (40%) Students will keep up with reading and weekly written assignments (normally turned in on Tuesdays), attend all class sessions, and participate actively in class discussions. In addition, the class will engage in an ongoing prayer practice rooted in the Psalms.

2. (30%) Students (in groups of 3-4) will teach one of the practices to the rest of the class. The teaching sessions will address key features of the practice historically as well as its potential for new life in contemporary settings. Teachers will look for ways to help the class learn about the practice by participating in the practice.
Lesson plans will be developed for the sessions by the group. A reflection on the teaching session will be written individually.

3. (30%) Students will write two papers (approximately 1500 words each).
   i) *Contrasting views of practice in James K.A. Smith and Kathryn Tanner* (due March 20)
   ii) *A Spirituality of Practice* (due May 11) Seniors need to submit this paper by May 9.

For all assignments, more detailed guidance will be provided in class.

*Electronic Technology Policy (in class)*
This is a low-to-no technology course during class time. There will rarely, if ever, be a need for using laptops, tablets, phones, or any other technology that takes attention away from the classroom. Please turn off and stow phones so they are neither visible nor accessible. For more information and research regarding the ways even the visible presence of a phone inhibits learning see Sherry Turkle’s *Reclaiming Conversation* (Penguin, 2015). You may however bring an electronic book version of required reading.

For note taking, a paper notebook will be sufficient, if not better. See the research by Mueller, P. and Oppenheimer, D., “The Pen Is Mightier Than the Keyboard: Advantages of Longhand Over Laptop Note Taking,” *Psychological Science, June 2014* vol. 25 no. 6 1159-1168. Link. If there is an overwhelming need for use of a laptop, please request permission from the professor.

*School Policies (Excerpted from the Faculty Handbook)*

1. **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. 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. See for further assistance, [http://www.lpts.edu/academics/academic-resources/academic-support-center/online-writing-lab/avoiding-gender-bias](http://www.lpts.edu/academics/academic-resources/academic-support-center/online-writing-lab/avoiding-gender-bias).

2. **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 the Seminary policy, see The Code of Student Conduct, 6.11; the Student Handbook, p. 19.
3. Special Accommodations
Students requiring accommodations for a documented physical or learning disability should be in
contact with the Director of the Academic Support Center during the first two weeks of a
semester (or before the semester begins) and should speak with the instructor 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 instructor.

4. Citation Policy
Citations in your papers should follow Seminary standards, which are based on these guides:
   - 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
   Copies of these guides are available at the library and in the Academic Support Center.

5. 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. Six or more absences
(1/4 of the course) may result in a low or failing grade in the course.

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

Note: ALL LIBRARY RESERVE READINGS ARE PRINTED IN SMALL CAPS

Thursday, February 2 *Course Introduction*

February 7-9 *Sorrowful Joy*
   Read: Raboteau, all.
   Assignment: Describe the way iconography reflects key moments or deep themes in
   Raboteau’s life (250-300 words).

   *All readings and assignments to be completed on Tuesdays of each week.*

February 14-16 *Weapons of the Spirit*
   Assignment: Write a Haiku for each of the twelve practices reflecting its core as the
   author describes it.

February 21-23 *Practices and Grace*
   Read: Pauw, Jones, and Coakley (in Volf and Bass, *Practicing Theology*);
   Amy Plantinga Pauw, “Graceful Practices,” 2005 Covenant Network Plenary (on
Assignment: Why are self-righteousness and legalism a persistent temptation with Christian practices? (250-300 words)

Be ready to sign up for teaching group

February 28-March 2 Practices and Education
Read: Wigger, “Multiple Intelligences” (on CAMS)
Assignment: TBD

March 7-9 Different Understandings of Practices
Read: Ted A. Smith, “Theories of Practice,” 244–54 (on CAMS)
Kathryn Tanner, Theories of Culture, 38-58, 93-119 (on CAMS)
James K.A. Smith, Imagining the Kingdom, 75-100 (on CAMS)
Amy Plantinga Pauw, Church in Ordinary Time, excerpt (on CAMS)
Assignment: Why is what Ted A. Smith calls a “cultural turn” important for ministry? (250-300 words)

March 14-16 Research and Study (no class)

March 21-23 Social and Political Dimensions of Practices
Read: Williams, Pohl, Bond, and Bedford (in Volf and Bass, Practicing Theology);
Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Ch. 2.
Assignment: Paper (1500 words)
James K.A. Smith emphasizes that church is a community with a shared habitus (Imagining, p. 81). Kathryn Tanner emphasizes that a culture is never a consistently unified whole (Theories, p. 45). Show the contrast between Smith and Tanner’s views of church as a community of practice. Then show how their contrasting views make sense (or don’t) of musical practices in a church community you know well.

March 28-30 The Corruption and Renewal of Practices
Read: Mary McClintock Fulkerson and Marcia W. Mount Shoop, A Body Broken, A Body Betrayed: Race, Memory, and Eucharist in White-Dominant Churches (Chs. 1 and 2)
“Apartheid and the Belhar Confession” (on CAMS)
Bell Hooks, “Engaged Pedagogy,” in Teaching to Transgress (Ch. 1)
Marthinus Daneel, “African Earthkeeping Churches” (On CAMS)

Watch: Wangari Maathai, “Planting the Future,” interview with Krista Tippett (On Being) link (about 50 minutes)

Assignment: Choose one:

1) Plant a tree. Share with the class your experience of planting the tree and any connections you see to the reading.
2) Write a liturgy for a tree-planting that you could use if you were to plant trees as a faithful practice.

April 4  *The Corruption and Renewal of Practices (cont.)*
Read: Gushee, *The Righteous Gentiles of the Holocaust*, Ch. 6 (PP. 117-148)

April 6  Teaching Session 1
Read: TBD

April 11  Teaching Session 2
Read: TBD

April 13  Easter Break (no class)

April 18  Teaching Session 3

April 20  Teaching Session 4
Read: Wigger, “Learning as We Teach” (on CAMS)

April 25  Teaching Session 5

April 27  Open (TBA)

May 2  Teaching Session 6

May 4  Review and Wrap Up

**Final Paper: May 11 (May 9 for graduating seniors)**
For this paper on “A Spirituality of Practice,” you may find it helpful to read Amy Plantinga Pauw, Introduction to Part 3 of *Church in Ordinary Time* (on CAMS).