

**Practicing Our Faith**  
**Fall 2023**  
**Schlegel 121; T/R, 1:30-2:50**  
**Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary**

**Faculty:**

**Professor Amy Plantinga Pauw**

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**Course description**

In this course we will survey the relatively 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 the requirement for both a WW elective and a CR elective for the MDiv degree (i.e., a “two-for-one” course). The course also counts towards the Concentration in Educational Ministry. Systematic Theology 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.

These goals and objectives are particularly relevant to the student learning outcomes identified below for the MAR, MAMFT, and MDiv degrees.

**Required Books**

Bass, Dorothy, ed. *Practicing our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 2010.

Raboteau, Albert J. *A Sorrowful Joy*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2002.

Volf, Miroslav and Bass, Dorothy, eds. *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001.

### **Required Resources on Canvas**

“Apartheid and the Belhar Confession” (PCUSA resource)

Note: full version is available at: [LINK](#)

Cureton, Adam. “Hiding a Disability and Passing as Non-Disabled,” in Cureton and Hill, eds., *Disability in Practice: Attitudes, Policies, and Relationships* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018: 15-32.

Daneel, Marthinus. “African Earthkeeping Churches”

Dykstra, Craig. “A Way of Seeing,” *Christian Century* (April 8, 2008).

Gushee, David. P. *The Righteous Gentiles of the Holocaust*, Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997 (ch. 6, pp. 117-148).

Freire, Paulo, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, ch. 2.

Fulkerson, Mary McClintock and Marcia W. Mount Shoop, *A Body Broken, A Body Betrayed: Race, Memory, and Eucharist in White-Dominant Churches* (Chs. 1 and 2).

Jennings, Willie James. *After Whiteness: An Education in Belonging*. Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2020, pp. 77-89.

Plantinga Pauw, Amy. *Church in Ordinary Time: A Wisdom Ecclesiology*, pp. 108-119, and 161-164.

Reynolds, Thomas E. “Invoking Deep Access: Disability beyond Inclusion in the Church,” *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* Vol. 51 No. 3 (Fall 2012): 212-223.

Smith, James K. A. *Imagining the Kingdom*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013, pp. 75-100, 141-142.

Spies, Miriam. “From Belonging as Supercrip to Misfitting as Crip: Journeying through Seminary,” *Journal of Disability and Religion* Vol. 25 No. 3 (2021): 296-311.

Watts Belser, Julia. “God on Wheels: Disability and Jewish Feminist Theology,” *Tikkun* Vol. 29 No. 4 (Fall 2014): 27-29.

Wigger, J. Bradley. “We Need a Place,” Working Draft, 2023.

### **Additional Resources** (most on Library Reserve)

Armstrong, Thomas. *Multiple Intelligences in the Classroom*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD, 2000.

Bass, Dorothy. *Receiving the day: Christian practices for opening the gift of time*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 2000.

Bass, Dorothy, Briehl, Susan R., eds. *On Our Way: Christian Practices for Living a Whole Life*. Nashville: Upper Room Books, 2010.

Bass, Dorothy, and Richter, Don, eds. *Way to Live: Christian Practices for Teens*. Nashville, TN: Upper Room Books, 2002.

Campbell, Linda; Bruce Campbell; and Dee Dickinson. *Teaching and Learning through Multiple Intelligences*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 2003.

Dykstra, Craig. *Growing in the Life of Faith: Education and Christian Practices* Louisville: Geneva, 1999.

Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Continuum, 1981.

- Fulkerson, Mary McClintock, and Marcia W. Mount Shoop, *A Body Broken, A Body Betrayed: Race, Memory, and Eucharist in White-Dominant Churches*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2015.
- Gushee, David. P. *The Righteous Gentiles of the Holocaust*, Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997.
- “Hilary Hahn Commits to Practicing for 100 Days in a Row—with Unexpected Results” *Strings Magazine*. [LINK](#)
- “Hilary Hahn: 100 Days Practice and Returning from the Pandemic.” YouTube [LINK](#)
- Harris, Maria. *Teaching and Religious Imagination*. New York: Harper & Row, 1987.
- Hicks, Douglas. *Money Enough: Everyday Practices for Living Faithfully in the Global Economy*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 2010.
- hooks, bell. “Engaged Pedagogy,” in *Teaching to Transgress* (ch. 1) [LINK](#)
- Lifelong Faith: Faith Formation in Christian Practices*, Vol. 2.2, (Summer, 2008).
- Long, Thomas G. *Testimony: Talking Ourselves into being Christian*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 2004.
- Long, Thomas G. *Accompany Them with Singing: The Christian Funeral*. Louisville: WJK, 2009.
- McFague, Sallie. *Super, Natural Christians: How we should love nature*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997.
- Palmer, Parker. *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher’s Life*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998.
- Paulsell, Stephanie. *Honoring the Body: Meditations on a Christian Practice*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 2002.
- Pohl, Christine D. *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999.
- Practicing Our Faith Website: <https://practicingourfaith.org/>
- Saliers, Don, and Saliers, Emily. *A Song to Sing, A Life to Live: Reflections on Music as Spiritual Practice*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 2005.
- Tye, Karen. *Basics of Christian Education*. St. Louis: Chalice, 2000.
- Webb, Stephen H. *Good Eating*. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2001.
- Wimberly, Ann. *Soul Stories: African-American Christian Education*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994.

### **Course Requirements**

1. (40%) Students will keep up with reading and weekly written assignments (normally submitted 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) 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. Teaching groups will consult with professors 2 weeks before they teach to discuss plans.
3. (30%) Students will write two papers (approximately 1500 words each).

- i) *A “Crip” Critique of James K.A. Smith’s Understanding of Practice* (due October 24)
- ii) *A Spirituality of Practice* (due December 14)

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

### **School Policies From the Dean’s Office**

**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. More discussion about inclusive language can be accessed from the Academic Support Center and from the section of the LPTS web site with information for current students.

**ACADEMIC HONESTY:** All work turned in to the instructor 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 [including A.I. chatbots] 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 Policy for Academic Honesty in the Student Handbook.

A special form of plagiarism is self-plagiarism or “double-dipping”: reusing an assignment written for another course (whether at LPTS or elsewhere) or incorporating a substantial portion of work submitted for another course in an assignment submission.

**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.

**CITATION POLICY:** Citations in your papers should follow Seminary standards, which are based on these guides:

American Psychological Association. *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*. 7th ed. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2020.

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*. 9th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020.  
*The Chicago Manual of Style*. 17th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017.

Copies of these guides are available at the library and in the Academic Support Center. See also the library's citation help page: <https://lpts.libguides.com/digitalresources/citingsources>

**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.

## **STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES**

### **MAR SLO 3:**

Demonstrate an understanding of multiple theological perspectives, historical and contemporary

### **MAR SLO 4:**

Demonstrate the ability to think theologically, strategically, imaginatively, and contextually about ethical issues

### **MAMFT SLO 5:**

Graduating students will be able to use a theologically informed and clinically appropriate framework to integrate religious and spiritual factors into the practice of Marriage and Family Therapy.

### **MDiv SLO 3:**

Students will be able to think theologically and ethically in relation to particular traditions and contemporary needs.

### **MDiv SLO 5:**

Students will acquire the knowledge and skill sets necessary for the practice of Christian ministry – as demonstrated by effectiveness in and reflection upon such activities as:

- Leading congregations within Offering leadership that emerges from the framework of a congregation's or organization's communions, confessions, and polity
- Preaching, teaching, and leading worship
- Praying and teaching others to pray
- Leading an organization effectively
- Providing public leadership and witness
- Inviting others into the Christian faith
- Offering pastoral care
- Participating in constructive intra-Christian and interreligious engagement.

### **Anti-racism QEP/SLO (all degree programs):**

- Students can describe strategies, grounded in their practice, for working toward racial justice appropriate to their particular vocational settings. Students can demonstrate competence with this SLO in many ways including, but not limited to, the following:
- Defining and using key terms in ways informed by an understanding of systemic racism.
  - Identifying racism in its many manifestations (structural, personal, communal, etc.)
  - Critical reflection on the history and current contexts regarding race, racism, and antiracism
  - Critical reflection on racist and antiracist practices and theologies
  - Developing and implementing antiracist policies, practices, and theologies

## COURSE SCHEDULE

Thursday, September 7 *Course Introduction*

September 12-14 *Sorrowful Joy*

Read: Raboteau, all.

Tuesday assignment (submit to Canvas): Describe the way iconography reflects key moments or deep themes in Raboteau's life (250-300 words). Or: Create an artwork (perhaps in an iconographic style) that does the same.

Thursday: Read Wigger, "We Need a Place." What icon, painting, relic, symbol, or "place," reflects your own spiritual life. Bring to class (not Canvas).

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

September 19-21 *Weapons of the Spirit*

Read: Bass, *Practicing Our Faith*, all.

Assignment: Choose one: Write a Haiku for each of the twelve practices reflecting its core as the author describes it. Or write a sonnet incorporating the heart of the twelve practices. Or write a fictional short story (under 600 words) that reveals the core of each practice.

September 26-28 *Practices and Grace*

Read: Pauw, S. Jones, Coakley, Williams, and Bond (in Volf and Bass, *Practicing Theology*)

Assignment: Why are self-righteousness and legalism persistent temptations with Christian practices? (250-300 words)

***Be ready to sign up for teaching group***

October 3-5 *Practices, Racism, and Anti-racism*

Read: Baldwin, James. "A Talk to Teachers," *The Saturday Review*, December 21, 1963, reprinted in *The Price of the Ticket, Collected Non-Fiction 1948-1985*, Saint Martin's, 1985. [LINK](#)

Read: Willie James Jennings, *Beyond Whiteness*, 77-89 (on Canvas)

Read: Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, ch. 2. (on Canvas)  
Assignment: Give an example of a Christian practice embedded in a racist *habitus*.  
Suggest ways that practice can be disrupted and transformed. (250-300 words)

October 10-12 ***Practices and “a ‘Crip’ Sensibility”***

Read: Miriam Spies, “From Belonging as Supercrip to Misfitting as Crip: Journeying through Seminary” (on Canvas)  
Read: Adam Cureton, “Hiding a Disability and Passing as Non-Disabled” (on Canvas)  
Read: Thomas E. Reynolds, “Invoking Deep Access: Disability beyond Inclusion within the Church” (on Canvas)  
Read: Julia Watts Belser, “God on Wheels” (on Canvas)  
Assignment: How might what Julia Watts Belser calls “a ‘crip’ sensibility” (p. 28) enrich the practice of ministry? (250-300 words)

October 17-19 ***Research and Study (no class)***

October 24-26 ***Cultural and Political Dimensions of Practices***

Read: Pohl, Bedford, G. Jones, and Tanner (in Volf and Bass, *Practicing Theology*);  
Read: James K.A. Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 75-100; 141-142 (on Canvas)  
Amy Plantinga Pauw, *Church in Ordinary Time*, 108-119 (on Canvas)

Assignment: *A “Crip” Critique of James K.A. Smith’s Understanding of Practice* (1500 words)

For James K.A. Smith, the goal of Christian education and formation is “the acquisition of a Christian *habitus*” (p. 84) and a clear rejection of the alternative “secular liturgies” (p. 141) that non-Christian culture offers. The goal is to “become a ‘native,’ ... having absorbed, and been absorbed into, the plausibility structures of a people” (p. 92). In the case of Christians, this involves the social body of the church “co-opting my body,” “conscripting my body through the most mundane means: through bodily postures, repeated words, ritualized cadences” (pp. 94-5). In their reflections on disability, however, Miriam Spies, Adam Cureton, Thomas Reynolds, and Julia Watts Belser warn of the dangers of co-opting and conscripting bodies. They advocate instead living “in between belonging and misfitting” (Spies, p. 310). In your paper, explain Smith’s understanding of *habitus* and bring it into critical conversation with the concerns of Spies, Cureton, Reynolds, and/or Watts Belser.

October 31-November 2 ***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) (on Canvas)  
Read: “Apartheid and the Belhar Confession” (on Canvas)  
Read: bell hooks, “Engaged Pedagogy,” in *Teaching to Transgress* (Ch. 1) [LINK](#)  
Marthinus Daneel, “African Earthkeeping Churches (on Canvas)  
Listen: 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.

November 7-9 ***The Corruption and Renewal of Practices (cont.)***

Read: Gushee, *The Righteous Gentiles of the Holocaust*, ch. 6 (pp. 117-148) (on Canvas)

Watch in class: Theologians under Hitler (1 hour).

Assignment: Give an example of a Christian practice that is in the process of being renewed. (250-300 words)

November 14 ***Teaching Session 1*** Read: Wigger, "Learning as We Teach"

November 16 ***Teaching Session 2***

Read: TBD

November 21 ***Teaching Session 3***

Read: Dykstra, Craig. "A Way of Seeing," *Christian Century* (April 8, 2008) (on Canvas)

November 23 ***Thanksgiving Break (no class)***

November 28 ***Teaching Session 4***

Read: TBD

November 30 ***Teaching Session 5***

December 5 ***Teaching Session 6***

December 7 ***Review and Wrap Up***

**Final Paper: December 14**

For this paper on "A Spirituality of Practice," you may find it helpful to read Amy Plantinga Pauw, "Epilogue," in *Church in Ordinary Time*, pp. 161-164 (on Canvas).

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### **Praying the Psalms**

Below is a way to pray the psalms over the course of a week. The process moves from the initial encounter to meaningful response, from interpreting the Psalm to being interpreted by it. This could be done individually or with others.

- 1: Reading the Psalm contemplatively
- 2: Reading the Psalm imaginatively



- 3: Reading the day through the Psalm
- 4: Reading our lives through the Psalm
- 5: Responding in faith to the Psalm

Guidance:

Day 1: **Read the Psalm**, silently and aloud. Consider handwriting it to dwell with each word.

Day 2: **Read the Psalm again, identifying what connects you to the Psalm.** What draws you into it? It may be an image that frightens you or one that disgusts you. It may be a beautiful and compelling idea or phrase. It may be a word or image that connects with something with which you are struggling at the moment, such as experiences of oppression or sickness or anger or being under attack by “enemies.” Recognize the ways the psalmists’ experiences and their questions and their struggles with life are ours, too. Where are those soul connections in the Psalm for you that claim your attention and invite you more deeply into the Psalm? **Write down your connections in your journal.**

Day 3: **Where are you conscious of the Psalm today?** Throughout the day look for connections to the Psalm. What brings it to mind? Where do you see or hear the Psalm’s concerns this day? For example, if Psalm 23 is in mind, do you recognize “valleys of deep darkness” somewhere and the fear of living in them and remember the promise of God’s company through them? Where are there places and moments of grief that prompted a question for you like the psalmist, “How long, O God?” If we see the Psalms differently when we look for them “in the world,” it is also the power of the Psalms that we see the world differently through the Psalms. How did the Psalm affect your “seeing” today? **At the end of the day, reflect upon and write down where you “experienced” the Psalm that day.**

Day 4: **Ask yourself, ‘How does this Psalm uncover and deepen my life?’** Reading the Psalms deeply opens us to them. We do not only open the text to us but the Scripture opens us to the text. We are being interpreted as surely as we are interpreting the Psalm. How, then, does this Psalm reveal something of yourself? How does it enrich or challenge your life? How did it reveal something about yourself or the world that you didn’t see or know before? **Record your thoughts.**

Day 5: **Choose a way to express or respond to the Psalm.** What does the Psalm move you to say or do? How can you express its meaning? Think of ways that are particularly helpful for you: for example, sing a song, write or play music, write poetry, write a story, dance, draw something, create a symbol, apologize to someone, write your senators, play a game with a child, spend time in silence—whatever enables you to say what the Psalm means and what you may hear it asking of you or of the community of faith. **In your journal, either describe what you did on Day 5, or include what you created for that day.**