

DM 6463 Seminar III
The Minister as Theological Interpreter

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Seminar Description

At the heart of our work together will be discussions about what it means for you to be a theological interpreter in your context for ministry. How might you use narrative to render a thick description of persons and communities, convey the moral ethos of your context, unearth embedded theologies, and illuminate matters of concern that might serve as the basis for a practical theology project in ministry?

Student learning Outcomes

SLO1: Students will demonstrate an advanced (comprehensive, appreciative, and critical) understanding and integration of ministry in relationship to several theological disciplines, including practical theology and theological ethics

SLO3: Students will develop and acquire skills and competencies in advanced theological reflection on the practice of ministry. . .

SLO5: Students will identify areas of personal growth in theological and ethical sensitivity. . .

Required Reading

1. *Report From Engine Company 82*, Dennis Smith, 1972 (reprinted 1983 and 1999)
2. *Moses, Man of the Mountain*, Zora Neale Hurston, 1939 (reprinted 1991 and 2008)
3. *On Job: God-Talk and the Suffering of the Innocent*, Gustavo Gutierrez, 1985 (English translation 1987)

Assignments

1) Reading and preparing to lead a discussion: (note: no writing required)

- *Report from Engine Company 82*, Dennis Smith, 1972

Smith writes early in his narrative about a sign that hangs in the kitchen of his firehouse. The sign reads “*THIS COULD BE THE NIGHT.*” Describe the significance of this sign in the story Smith tells. Does the sign have any theological significance? Imagine a sign that functions similarly in your context. What would it read?

- *Moses, Man of the Mountain*, Zora Neale Hurston, 1939

Hurston writes in chapter IV: “*The police, the secret police. That was what worried the people of Goshen. Just to look around, they were nowhere, but from the effects they were everywhere.*” Discuss the literary, exegetical, theological, and contemporary significance of this passage.

- ***On Job: God-Talk and the Suffering of the Innocent***, Gustavo Gutierrez, English translation 1987.

Gutierrez writes, “*In the person of Job, alone here before God, are present all the innocent of this world who suffer unjustly and ask ‘why?’ of the God in whom they believe.*” (“The Mysterious Meeting of Two Freedoms.”) Imagine that a person in the Bible fulfilled a similar role for your congregation or community, whom would it be and why? Can you identify a theologian who helps you to ask and answer the theological questions that are most pressing in your context?

2) Theological reflection on context:

Reflect on the following questions in light of your context in ministry (the “we” in the questions below). Write no more than 500 words (double-spaced) on each question. The questions are chapter titles in *Essentials of Christian Theology*, edited by William C. Placher (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003). The goal of the exercise is to help you to think about faith in a systematic and contextual way. You need not use the Placher text, but you might find a systematic theology text to be helpful.

- *What do we mean by God?* (Doctrine of God)
- *What’s wrong with us?* (Human nature and human sin)
- *How does Jesus make a difference?* (The person and work of Jesus Christ)
- *Why bother with church?* (The Church and its worship)
- *Where are we going?* (eschatology)

3) Write a theological interpretation:

- In no more than 3-5 double-spaced pages, use your reading for this seminar and reflection on the questions above to introduce your class cohort to the community that is at the heart of your context in ministry. How has this community changed/informed your ministry? (Remember, you are not a spectator. You are a member of the community you describe.)

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. 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 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 Policy for Academic Honesty in the Student Handbook.

Special Accommodations

Students requiring accommodations for a documented physical or learning disability should be in contact with the instructor and with the Director of the Academic Support Center in advance of the course, to arrange appropriate adjustments. Students with environmental or other sensitivities that may affect their learning are also encouraged to speak with the instructor. The Director of the Academic Support Center is the Rev. Beth Herrinton-Hodge (email bherrintonhodge@lpts.edu).

Citation Policy

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

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

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

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

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

Attendance Policy

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. Because this course is only one week long, a single unexcused absence may result in a lower grade in the course, and more than one absence (whether excused or unexcused) may result in a failing grade in the course.

Tentative Schedule

Time	Tuesday, January 3	Wednesday, January 4	Thursday, January 5	Friday, January 6	Saturday, January 7
8:30–8:45	Morning Prayer	Morning Prayer	Morning Prayer	Morning Prayer	Morning Prayer
8:45–10:15	1. Intro to Class 2. Renewing acquaintances 3. Housekeeping with Dr. LaBoy	Discussion: <i>Report From Engine Co. 82</i>	Discussion: <i>Moses, Man of the Mountain</i>	Discussion: <i>On Job</i>	Discussion: Anticipating a project in ministry (ten minutes per person)
10:15–10:30	Break	Break	Break	Break	Break
10:30–12:00	Discussion: Theological Ethics and Storytelling	Discussion: Theological Reflection on Context	Discussion: Theological Interpretation	Discussion: Bring a theologian to class	Early dismissal @ 11:30 Safe Travels!
12:00–1:00	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	
1:00–2:30	Discussion: The Role of Theological Interpreter	Discussion: Theological Reflection on Context	Discussion: Theological Interpretation	Discussion: Bring a theologian to class	
2:30–2:45	Break	Break	Break	Break	
2:45–4:45 (short writing assignment at 2:45, and one-to-one conversation at 3:45)	Please return to the seminar room at 2:45 for a short writing assignment, followed by one-to-one conversation at 3:45	Writing assignment at 2:45PM, and one-to-one conversation at 3:45PM <u>Taco Bar Supper Winn Center 6:00PM</u>	Please return to the seminar room at 2:45 for a short writing assignment, followed by one-to-one conversation at 3:45	Please return to the seminar room at 2:45 for a short writing assignment, followed by one-to-one conversation at 3:45	

NOTE: Professor Williamson must depart on Wednesday at 1:00PM and will return for Morning Prayer on Thursday.