

SM101-3: Transforming Seminary Education  
**“Practicing Ministry by Engaging Stories Together”**  
Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary  
August 17-28, 2015 9:00AM – 12:30PM

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**Description:**

This course provides a foundation for seminary education and an intensive introduction to the richness of the theologically reflective life. It provides opportunities to practice the overlapping yet discrete steps of the hermeneutical circle and cycle of theological reflection. This cycle makes explicit the process of learning how to remain engaged in ongoing and challenging dialogues with our own stories as well as those of others.

These stories include the biblical Story and the countless narratives therein, the stories of care-seekers and colleagues, current situations and historical events, wisdom from religious traditions, facts and fiction, and our own life stories. Parallels between the process of engaging and interpreting the Bible and providing pastoral care in a variety of situations will be explored. This *interdisciplinary approach* will facilitate observation of the dialogical and dynamic character of ministerial practices such as pastoral care, preaching, teaching, and worship leadership. Learning to engage in these practices and to reflect upon them theologically requires practice, patience, humility, self-awareness, courage, curiosity, and countless dialogue partners. In summary, both theological reflection and the practices of ministry, including biblical interpretation, are concerned with listening to, and engaging, stories – about God, self, others, the world.

**Student Learning Outcomes:**

After completing this course, students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate skills of theological reflection and self-reflection by moving through the steps of the hermeneutical circle and cycle of theological reflection with self-awareness;
2. Engage in respectful dialogue around differences, such as biblical interpretation, theological understandings, cultural/ethnic identities, and religious difference;
3. Identify practices of ministry that are responsive both to the needs of the local community and shaped by the wisdom of the Church;
4. Demonstrate vocational awareness and self-identity as persons who “participate in the redemptive ministry of Jesus Christ” in a pluralistic world;
5. Articulate the advantages and challenges of openness to the other, i.e., a posture of exploration, as one begins theological education.

## Assignments & Evaluation:

Students are expected to attend class punctually, to have completed the readings and assignments for each class session, and to participate in discussions in class.

Assignments are listed here as *summaries* of the work required along with their due dates. Additional information will be available as the course unfolds.

1. 3 page **Response** to Eboo Patel's *Acts of Faith*. **Due in class, Monday, August 17<sup>th</sup>.**

2. **Journal Entries and Summative Reflection. Entries due daily; completed journal with summative reflection due Monday, August 31<sup>st</sup>.** Students are expected to write in journals (paper or electronic) for at least 30 minutes each day of the course. These entries will be completed outside of class as preparation for in-class discussions (so bring them to class) and will respond to specific questions listed in this syllabus. Professors will check-in on completion of this assignment as the course develops; however, students will not submit their journals until the end of the course. Students will write a final 2-page summary of their "learnings" from the course based on their journal entries.

3. 3 page **Verbatim. Due Monday, August 24<sup>th</sup>.** A verbatim is a pastoral care and counseling learning tool in which caregivers reconstruct a care conversation from notes taken immediately afterward. (See Doehring, 2015, p. 37 footnote #1, and bottom of p. 51-top of 52 for further description of the assignment.) We will review a sample together in class and provide additional instructions as needed.

4. **Small Group Final Project. Due in class on Thursday, August 27<sup>th</sup>, or Friday, August 28<sup>th</sup>.** Working in small groups, you are asked to record and present in 15 minutes, a "response to the biblical text" we will be studying in class together. This response can take various forms. Authors Tiffany and Ringe describe possibilities as follows: "One might be led to shape a case study as one's experience with the biblical text intersects with one's work or one's life. The response might also find expression in a sermon or as part of an academic exegesis paper. A group might move from biblical reflection to action on a particular problem or task. . . a group working together might give expression to their response...in music, dance, poetry, a video, or in some form of graphic art" (see pp. 120-121 along with p. 21 for a fuller description.)

**This course is graded Pass/Fail. A student must complete each assignment in order to pass.**

**Course Books:** (available for purchase at e-campus bookstore or on Library Reserve)

- Eboo Patel, *Acts of Faith: The Story of an American Muslim, the Struggle for the Soul of a Generation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2007).
- Frederick C. Tiffany and Sharon H. Ringe, *Biblical Interpretation: A Roadmap* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996).
- Pamela Cooper-White and Michael Cooper-White, *Exploring Practices of Ministry* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014).

## **Course Policies:**

### 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.

### 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 Press, 2013.  
American Psychological Association. *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*. 6th ed. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2010.

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

### 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. Two or more absences may result in a failing grade in the course.

### 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 few days of the course 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.

Use of Inclusive Language: Our use of language, personally and as a community, is a powerful tool of both healing and oppression. In order to establish a more egalitarian environment and 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. Avoid language for people that excludes part of the population or perpetuates stereotypes (e.g., use “humanity” instead of “mankind”). Do not assume masculine gender when the gender of the person is unknown.

When referring to God, you are encouraged to use a variety of images and metaphors. The God of the Bible is envisioned in both personal and non-personal ways, as well as masculine and feminine terms. Referring to God repeatedly as “He” does not capture this splendid diversity.

Policy on late work: All written assignments are due on the date given in the syllabus. Assignments submitted late will be penalized in the grading.

Use of electronic devices in class: Many of us are becoming increasingly addicted to our electronics such that we are unable to focus on other (more important) matters for a period of time. Thus, we ask that we create a time and space to set aside such distractions as email, Facebook, and texting in order to engage our minds and hearts. Do not send or read text messages during class. Cell phones should be silenced and/or turned off and put away. In the event that you have a legitimate need to be accessible during class, you may ask me for an exception to this rule. Laptops should not be used if you cannot trust yourself to restrict your use to note-taking. You may not access the Internet during class time. Any misuse of electronic devices during class time, including checking of email or social networking sites, will be grounds for dismissal from the session.

## Course Schedule:

### Monday, August 17: Introductions

Patel response paper due today

#### Today's Topics

1. Introductions to peer colleagues and professors. Sharing Our Stories.
2. Introduce the class and syllabus
3. Engagement with Eboo Patel's story

#### Readings for Today:

Eboo Patel, *Acts of Faith: The Story of an American Muslim, the Struggle for the Soul of a Generation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2007).

### Tuesday, August 18: Theologian-Practitioners

#### Journal Entry Due Today:

Where you read “theological reflection” in the Killen and De Beer piece, try substituting “seminary education” and describe how doing that affects the way you position yourself at the outset of your journey in seminary.

What do the authors say about the role of human experience in theological reflection and why do they take this position?

#### Today's Topics:

1. Theological Reflection & the Stance of Exploration: Tradition and Experience
2. Practical Theology & the Practices of Ministry

#### Readings for Today:

Patricia O'Connell Killen and John De Beer, *The Art of Theological Reflection* (New York: Crossroad, 1994), Introduction and Chapter 1, vii-xii, 1-19. [on CAMS and Library Reserve]

Cooper-White, *Exploring Practices of Ministry*, Introduction & Chapter 1

Eric Barreto, ed. *Reading Theologically* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014) Introduction and Chapter 1, “Reading Basically.” [on CAMS]

## **Wednesday, August 19: Beginning the Journey of Engagement at Home**

### Today's Topics:

1. Bringing Ourselves to the Encounter – STEP 1
2. “Embedduals” vs. Individuals. Who are We? // Ultimate Beliefs, Core Values, Spiritual Practices

### Readings for Today:

Tiffany & Ringe, *Biblical Interpretation: A Roadmap*, Chapters 1 and 2.

Carrie Doehring, *The Practice of Pastoral Care: A Postmodern Approach Revised and Expanded Edition* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2015), pp. 18-20. [CAMS]

Bring a Bible to class today and future class days

## **Thursday, August 20: Encountering Texts and Stories**

### Topics:

1. Encounter as Reading and Listening for Your Reactions – STEP 2
2. Parallel between dialogical nature of communication: between 2 persons or person and text

### Readings for Today:

Jennifer Shepherd, “Thinking Mindfully,” in Eric Barreto, ed. *Thinking Theologically* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 7-22. [on CAMS and Library Reserve]

Carrie Doehring, *The Practice of Pastoral Care: A Postmodern Approach Revised and Expanded Edition* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015), chapter 2, pp 37-44, 49-52. [CAMS and Library Reserve]

Patricia O’Connell Killen and John De Beer, *The Art of Theological Reflection* (New York: Crossroad, 1994), bottom half of p. 27--top of 32, plus notes on pg. 146 [on CAMS and Library Reserve]

**Friday, August 21:  
Reading in Context & Listening Well**

Topics:

1. Encounter as Close Reading in Historical and Literary Context – STEPS 3 & 4
2. Embodied Listening

Readings for Today:

Tiffany & Ringe, *Biblical Interpretation: A Roadmap*, Chapters 3 & 4

2 short articles on our selected Biblical Book [CAMS]

Carrie Doehring, *The Practice of Pastoral Care: A Postmodern Approach*, Chapter 3 “Embodied Listening” pp. 53-72. [CAMS and Library Reserve]

**Monday, August 24: The Challenges of Engaging Others**

Topics:

1. Engagement with Other Readers and Communities – STEP 5
2. Verbatim Work
3. Social Location
4. Various Perspectives on Biblical Book

Readings for Today:

Tiffany & Ringe, *Biblical Interpretation: A Roadmap*, Chapters 5 and 11.

Various perspectival readings of Biblical Book: 3 articles. [CAMS]

## **Tuesday, August 25: Toward a Response**

### Topics:

1. Dr. Shannon Craigo-Snell lecture on Christology
2. Response of Public Theology

### Readings for Today:

Craigo-Snell, Shannon, and Shawnthea Monroe. *Living Christianity: A Pastoral Theology for Today* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 27-68. [CAMS]

Patricia O'Connell Killen and John De Beer, *The Art of Theological Reflection* (New York: Crossroad, 1994), 66-68, 82-87. [on CAMS and Library Reserve]

## **Wednesday, August 26: Responding**

### Topics:

1. Dr. Christine Hong Lecture: Engaging Stories in Worship
2. Responding through Pastoral Care

### Readings for Today:

Cooper-White, *Exploring Practices of Ministry*, Chapter 3 and 4



## **Thursday, August 27: Projects and Responding**

### Topics:

1. Presentation of Projects
2. Responding through Christian Education

### Readings for Today:

Cooper-White, *Exploring Practices of Ministry*, Chapter 5

## **Friday, August 28: Lost in Wonder, Love, and Praise: Sending Us Off to Wonder**

### Topics:

1. Presentation of Projects
2. Sending You Off to Wonder

### Readings for Today:

Katherine Paterson, "In Search of Wonder," in *The Invisible Child: On Reading and Writing Books for Children* (New York: Dutton Children's Books, 2001), 3-24. [CAMS]