

SM101-3: Transforming Seminary Education
“Engaging Stories Together”
Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary
August 15-26, 2016; 9:00AM – 12:30PM
Drs. Carol J. Cook and Tyler Mayfield

Description:

This course provides an intensive introduction to seminary education and 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. In summary, theological reflection including biblical interpretation and pastoral listening are concerned with 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. Articulate own theological perspective, mindful of global, multicultural, multi-religious context of contemporary ministry;
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 15th.**
2. **Journal Entries and Summative Reflection. Entries due daily; completed journal with summative reflection due Monday, August 29th.** 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. **"Partners in Listening" Project. Due in class on Monday, August 22nd.** Students will engage in a listening exercise with a partner. See "Exercise 2: Partners in Listening," in Justes, Emma J. *Hearing Beyond the Words*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006 pp. 42-43 on CAMS for more information.
4. **Small Group Final Project. Due in class on Thursday, August 25th, or Friday, August 26th.** Working in small groups, students 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 and on Library Reserve)

- Killen, Patricia O'Connell & John de Beer. *The Art of Theological Reflection*. New York: Crossroad, 1994.
- Patel, Eboo. *Acts of Faith: The Story of an American Muslim, the Struggle for the Soul of a Generation*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2007.
- Tiffany, Frederick C. and Sharon H. Ringe, *Biblical Interpretation: A Roadmap*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996.

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:

- American Psychological Association. *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*. 6th ed. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2010.
- 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.
- *The Chicago Manual of Style*. 16th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 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:

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.

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 15: Introductions

Patel response paper due today based on assignment sent out in advance of the course:

Please thoughtfully read Eboo Patel's *Acts of Faith* and write a 3 page double-spaced response to it. Please do not summarize the book. Instead, write one page about some aspect(s) of his journey that resonate with you. Why do they resonate? Write another page about an aspect that troubles you. Why do you find it troubling? Write another page on some aspect(s) that inspire you. Why? Make connections between your story and his story.

Today's Topics

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

Readings for Today:

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

Tuesday, August 16: Theological Reflection and Posture

Journal Entry Due Today: What is your response to the first page of the Introduction to Killen and de Beer's *The Art of Theological Reflection* where the authors refer to religious traditions as "powerful, for good and for ill" and claim that "religious traditions grow and change subtly as each generation sings the songs and tells the stories ... that freezing a tradition's practices and teachings in a rigid form enervates it" (vii)? What are the implications of religious traditions being "alive?" (including a sacred text like the Bible)

Today's Topics:

1. Theological Reflection & the Stance of Exploration
2. The Roles of Tradition and Experience

Readings for Today:

Killen, Patricia O'Connell & John de Beer. *The Art of Theological Reflection*. New York: Crossroad, 1994, Introduction and Chapter 1.

Wednesday, August 17: Engaging Stories in Parallel Disciplines

Journal Entry Due Today: Choose at least one of the activities listed in Jackson, pp. 8-9 and reflect on your experience.

Today's Topics:

1. Engaging Stories through Biblical Interpretation and Pastoral Listening
2. Panel Discussion on Listening in Ministry: Aritha Berroa, Bob Cunningham, Lauren Jones Mayfield,

Readings for Today:

Hedahl, Susan K. *Listening Ministry: Rethinking Pastoral Leadership*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001, pp. 6-25 (don't worry about the taxonomy). [CAMS]

Hopkins, Denise Dombkowski and Michael S. Koppel, *Grounded in the Living Word: The Old Testament and Pastoral Care Practices*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010, pp. 1-9. [CAMS]

Jackson, Cari. *The Gift to Listen: the Courage to Hear*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Books, 2003, pp. 2-9. [CAMS]

Thursday, August 18: Beginning the Journey at Home/ Encountering Stories Biblical Interpretation: Starting around the Hermeneutical Circle

Journal Entry Due Today: In light of what listening to the Bible involves and/or what you've learned about listening in ministry thus far, respond to 2 or 3 of the common eight assumptions about listening listed on p. 9 in yesterday's reading by Hedahl.

Today's Topics:

1. Bringing Ourselves to the Encounter of the Text – STEP 1
2. Encounter as Reading and Listening for Your Reactions – STEP 2

Readings for Today:

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

Bring a Bible to class today and future class days

Friday, August 19: Beginning the Journey at Home/ Encountering Stories
Pastoral Listening: Revisiting the Hermeneutical Circle with “Living Human Documents”

Journal Entry Due Today: Engage in one of the 5 reflection activities listed in Jackson, pp. 25-26

Topics:

1. Parallel between dialogical nature of communication: between 2 persons OR person and text/idea: revisit STEPS 1 and 2 in reverse order
2. Encounter as Listening for Your Reactions: being jarred and “looking up”
3. Listening to feelings

Readings for Today:

Cooper-White, Pamela and Michael Cooper-White. *Exploring Practices of Ministry*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014, pp. 79-84; 89-91. [CAMS]

Hunsinger, Deborah van Deusen. *Bearing the Unbearable: Trauma, Gospel, and Pastoral Care*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2015, pp. 101-113. [CAMS]

Killen, Patricia O’Connell & John de Beer. *The Art of Theological Reflection*. New York: Crossroad, 1994, pp. 27-32.

Shepherd, Jennifer. “Thinking Mindfully.” In *Thinking Theologically*, edited by Eric Barreto, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015, pp. 7-22. [CAMS]

Monday, August 22: Reading in Context & Listening Well

Due in class: Exercise 2: Partners in Listening. Justes, pp. 42-43 [CAMS]

Topics:

1. Encounter as Close Reading in Historical and Literary Context – STEPS 3 & 4
2. Embodied Listening/Contextual Listening: others are embedduals too; listening styles; from inner chatter to inner peace

Readings for Today:

Jackson, Cari. *The Gift to Listen: the Courage to Hear*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Books, 2003, pp. 81-96. [CAMS]

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

2 short articles on our selected Biblical Book [CAMS]

Tuesday, August 23: The Challenges of Engaging Others

Journal Entry Due Today: “Becoming Open to Listening: The aim of this exercise is to prepare you for moments when receiving what is said may be increasingly difficult. By practicing listening in a non-threatening setting, you can develop ‘muscles’ for being able to welcome and receive when it is difficult to do so. Settle somewhere where you can be comfortable, relaxed, and undisturbed. Select some enjoyable music. Listen to the music and make an effort to open yourself to receive the music. Do more than your accustomed listening. Welcome the music and receive it; be attentive to it; give it a place in yourself. Keep paying attention to your quality of listening. How hospitable are you being to the music?” (Justes, p. xx)

Topics:

1. Engagement with Other Readers and Communities – STEP 5
2. Listening Around Differences
3. Various Perspectives on Biblical Book

Readings for Today:

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

Perspectival readings of Biblical Book: 2 articles. [CAMS]

Justus, Emma J. *Hearing beyond the Words*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006, pp. 21-27 and 93-105. [CAMS]

Wednesday, August 24: The Challenges of Engaging Others: Difficult Listening

Journal Entry Due Today: “My plan for preparation: Think about preparing to listen to someone. Write out what you will do to prepare yourself. Develop your own ritual for getting ready to listen. Develop a prayer that you could use to be part of your getting ready process and your ritual of preparation. If you would find it helpful, share your process and your prayer with a colleague and ask for feedback.” (Justes, p. 44)

Topics:

1. Listening & Inclusive language
2. Listening about Race with Professor Scott Williamson: Circle Processes

Readings for Today:

Justus, Emma J. *Hearing beyond the Words*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006, pp. 40-41. [CAMS]

Sue, Derald Wing. *RaceTalk and the Conspiracy of Silence: Understanding and Facilitating Difficult Dialogues on Race*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2015, pp. 3-17. [CAMS]

Thursday, August 25: Projects and Responding: STEP 6

Topics:

1. Wrap-Up of Previous Days
2. Presentation of Projects

Readings for Today:

Marshall, Joretta L. “When Listening Is Not Enough: Pastoral Theology and Care in Turbulent Times.” In *Strike Terror No More: Theology, Ethics, and the New War*, edited by Jon L. Berquist. St. Louis, Missouri: Chalice Press, 2002, pp. 164-171. [CAMS]

Friday, August 26: 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:

Paterson, Katherine. “In Search of Wonder.” In *The Invisible Child: On Reading and Writing Books for Children*. New York: Dutton Children’s Books, 2001, pp. 3-24. [CAMS]