

Reflection Group Syllabus, Fall 2018

“The Theologically Reflective Life”

Tuesdays 3:00-4:20

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Description

The reflection groups provide a structure for students to experience the value of face-to-face learning in community and to engage in theological reflection with a range of conversation partners. The groups are a space where students are encouraged to make connections among different parts of the seminary’s curriculum and community life, to deepen and clarify their sense of vocation, and to practice theological reflection broadly understood as a generative conversation between tradition and experience. The groups will meet in plenary or in section, according to the syllabus.

Course Goals and Outcomes

The reflection groups are designed to help students:

- become active, responsible learners, in part by developing a portfolio that will extend over the duration of their time in seminary,
- reflect on and clarify their theological identity and vocation,
- become involved in campus life and the larger community,
- develop skills in reading, writing, and reflecting on texts and other learning experiences

Assignments

Students are expected to attend all class sessions punctually and to participate in class discussions. Active participation includes, but is not limited to, coming to class prepared, listening carefully to others’ thoughts, asking relevant questions, responding to others’ comments, and inviting others into the conversation. It does not include dominating a discussion.

1. Develop and maintain electronic portfolios. You are required to add content throughout the semester. Your portfolios should include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Autobiographical sketch highlighting your theological identity and vocation
- Reflection on what you have learned about yourself as a learner
- Other reflections as assigned

2. Attend the Presley lecture and the Festival of Theology campus events and reflect on them in your portfolio and be prepared to share reflections in your small group
3. Attend at least one off-campus event (lecture, rally, protest, retreat, etc.) and reflect on its connections to what you're learning at LPTS

Attend at least 4 campus events (convocation, chapel, Women at the Well, Student Council meeting, etc.) during the semester and reflect upon these.

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

A Statement on Portfolios

An academic portfolio is a digital collection of artifacts created, managed, and, at times, shared by a student. These artifacts may include, but are not limited to, academic essays, blog posts, sermons, creative writings, recordings, etc. More than merely a collection of artifacts, however, a portfolio provides opportunities for reflection and further learning. Students will maintain portfolios throughout their time at Louisville Seminary that will serve various purposes.

1. Student Purposes

Portfolios provide a virtual space for students to examine and reflect on their learning and to grow in their degree programs. They also provide opportunities for students to learn how to curate a professional self-presentation. A portfolio remains the student's property after graduation, and it can have career purposes at that time.

2. Pedagogical/Course Purposes

Some courses may require students to utilize portfolios for pedagogical purposes and course-specific goals.

3. Effectiveness Purposes

Sampled, unidentified artifacts from portfolios will be reviewed annually by faculty for degree program improvement. With this in mind, students should not include anything in their portfolios that they would not want someone else to read. While this annual review does not intend to provide feedback to individual students, the feedback it provides for course design, curriculum content, and other matters of the Seminary learning environment will have lasting importance and improve the learning experience of future students.

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 (bherrintonhodge@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 instructors.

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 portfolio assignments are due by midnight on the day BEFORE they will be discussed in class, as indicated in the syllabus. For example, portfolio reflections that will be shared in class on October 9 should be submitted by midnight on October 8. Assignments submitted late will not be accepted.

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.

Calendar:

- September 11** (plenary): Introductions and autobiographies
- September 18** (plenary): Introduction to portfolios with Marcus Hong
- September 24** Add an autobiographical sketch to your portfolio that highlights your theological identity and vocation. Read Martin Luther King's "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" (CAMS)
- September 25** (plenary): Faculty panel reflecting theologically on "Letter from a Birmingham Jail"
- October 2** (section): Engaging in theological reflection on Alice Walker, "The Welcome Table" (distributed in class)
- October 9** (section): Engaging in theological reflection, part 2. Share a portfolio reflection that draws together your autobiographical sketch and the King and/or Walker readings, making sure to include your understanding of God's presence.

October 16: RESEARCH & STUDY

- October 23** (plenary): Attend Presler lecture on Oct 24
- October 30** (section): Share portfolio reflections on the Presler lecture. Did you encounter any challenges in completing this assignment?
- November 6** (plenary): Attend at least one Festival of Theology event during the week
- November 13** (section): Share portfolio reflections on the Festival of Theology
- November 20** (*no meeting*): Time can be used for attending an off-campus or on-campus event
- November 27** (section): Share portfolio reflections on a selected extra-curricular experience.
- December 4** (section): Reflect on the artifacts that you added to your portfolio this semester and be prepared to discuss what you learned about yourself as a learner.