**Course of Study 524: “Theological Reflection on the Practice of Ministry”**

The Mississippi Conference ~ The United Methodist Church

January-February, 2023

Instructor: Rev. Scott Larsen

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**Capstone Course Goal**:

*This course is focused on the integration of the biblical, theological, and practical aspects of ministry.* The ministry of the pastor as theologian and spiritual guide is continuously carried out through preaching, teaching, pastoral counseling, and even in our administrative tasks. The ministry of the pastor as theologian and spiritual guide becomes a community witness as we live out our faith in the local context and larger world. This course stresses theology as an ongoing task as pastors are required to think, speak and act with clarity on current issues and events. This course will equip you to reflect critically on God, God’s presence in the world, as well as God’s call on the Body of Christ found in your congregations.

**Course Objectives**:

1. Articulate a Trinitarian theology for the practice of ministry;
2. Demonstrate the ability to reflect theologically;
3. State clearly the nature and mission of the Church and its relation to pastoral ministry;

**Textbooks**:

All texts listed below may be ordered through cokesbury.com or amazon.com. You can sometime get used copies at a reduced price through the latter. Please get these and begin reading them as soon as possible.

**Required Reading:**

* Cahalan, Kathleen. Introducing the Practice of Ministry. Collegeville, MNL Liturgical Press, 2010.
* Willimon, William H., Pastor: The Theology and Practice of Ordained Ministry. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2016.
* Wood, Charles and Ellen Blue. Attentive to God: Thinking Theologically in Ministry. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2008.

Written assignments should be submitted on Course Connect, sent to me by U. S. Mail at the above address or to by email at [sglarsen1@gmail.com](mailto:sglarsen1@gmail.com). Please feel free to contact me by phone or email if you need clarification regarding any of these assignments or have any questions at all.

**524 Course Requirements:**

* Digital attendance at and participation in synchronous class sessions:
  + January 27 – 6:00-9:00pm
  + January 28 – 9:00am-3:00pm
  + February 11 – Zoom. 10:00am-12:00pm, and 1:00 – 3:00 pm
* Online posts and discussions on Course Connect **every** week.
* Complete and submit all assignments on time:
  + **Pre-course assignment #1 by January 26. Length = 5 pages**

Read Wood and Blue’s book and write an essay with the following components:

1) an analysis of how the authors define theology

and why they believe it is essential to ministry;

2) an analysis of three of the cases the authors write about

and how they make use of theological reflection in addressing the issues of each case;

3) a discussion of a situation you have had in your own

appointment and how theological reflection helped or could have helped in your approach to addressing the issues of your case.

Be prepared to be presented new “case studies” in class to discuss and respond

to these cases based on your reading.

* + **Pre-course assignment #2 by January 26. Length = 4-6 pages**

Read Cahalan’s book in its entirety. Select two chapters and write a synopsis of each, including 1) your understanding of Cahalan’s intent in the chapter,

2) what in this chapter resonates with you and your current

ministry setting,

3) why (or why not) the concepts presented in the chapter are

important to the future of the United Methodist Church.

Be prepared to make an oral presentation to the class.

* + **Pre-course assignment #3 by January 26. Length = 6-8 pages**

Read Willimon’s book. Write, in your own words, an analysis of

1. his understanding of what it means to be a pastor;
2. his understanding of theology in the practice of ministry;
3. an idea you agree with and an idea you disagree with;
4. three questions you’d like discussed in class.

Be prepared to discuss your choices in class.

* + **One must have completed this pre-course assignment to be admitted to class on January 26th.**

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* + **Assignment #4: Practice of Ministry Presentation**

All three of our books define and discuss practices of ministry: Administration & Leadership; Pastoral Care; Prayer and Worship; Preaching; Social Justice and Mercy; Teaching. Please draw on all three books, your experiences in a church you serve(d); your papers, and at least one outside source for your class presentation on your assigned practice of ministry. There will also be a Course Connect component to your presentation to guide class discussion.

**524 Course Outline:**

**Before Session I:**

* Submit pre-course assignments #1, #2 and #3 (see above for more details);
* Watch video on 6 Processes of Spiritual Leadership:  
  <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fsVoYo737aQ>

**Session 1: Friday, January 27, 2022 5:30pm-7:30pm**

* Introductions & Expectations
  + Be prepared to introduce yourself. Please include your favorite image or word for God.
* What is Theological Reflection?
* What are Practices of Ministry?

**Session 2: Saturday, January 28, 2022 9:00am-3:00am**

* Who is the God who calls us?
* What is God calling us to?
* What Principles and Processes guide us in ministry?

**By January 31:**

* Post a children’s sermon on The Trinity on Course Connect. (video, audio, or text)
* Post a video, audio, or written article on your assigned Practice of Ministry to Course Connect.
  + Create a discussion question based on the resource you posted on your Practice of Ministry in Course Connect.

**Before Session 3:**

* Respond to each response posted to the discussion question on your Practice.
* Watch, listen to, read AND respond to each resource and discussion question posted by your colleagues, including the children’s sermons.

**Session 3: Saturday, February 11, 2022 10:00-3:00pm**

* Practice of Ministry Presentations - Assignment #4
* Closing discussion

**524 Course Evaluations:**

Academic standards are those expected in *a course at Candler School of Theology* so that, when it is appropriate, seminary credit may be given. Good effort, good intention, and time spent on assignments, while welcome, are not the basis of grading.

The grade of “A” means that you have responded to your assignment on time, appropriately and accurately, that you have presented your thoughts clearly and coherently in your own words, and that you have given attention to good writing (for example, in spelling, grammar, and punctuation).

The grade of “B” means that you have succeeded in important ways. For example, you express your understanding of your reading clearly and meaningfully and show your grasp of the subject by demonstrating how it would apply to your life experience.

The grade of “C” means that you have met the minimum requirements of the assignment, but your work is lacking in important qualities.

The grade of “D” means that you have not met the minimum requirements of the assignment. Your paper has major problems.

Overall evaluation of the course will consider the quality of work on written assignments and also the quality of participation in class discussion. It is the quality of participation rather than the extent of participation that is valued. Your papers should be 12pt, double-spaced, one-inch margins.

The rubric for evaluation is:

Digital attendance and active class participation 10 X 3 = 30%

Papers 7 X 3 = 21%

Practice of Ministry Presentation 20 X 1 = 20%

Discussion Posts and Responses in Course Connect TBD =29%