

**Syllabus**  
(10-01-09)  
**Ministry 6301: Introduction to Christian Ministry**  
**Austin Graduate School of Theology**  
**Fall 2009**

**Instructor:**

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**Course description:**

Early in the biblical narrative God called a people to be God's servants in God's work to redeem God's rebellious and fallen world. God not only called, but also equipped these people for this service or ministry. In the Old Testament, Israel is given that privilege. Jesus, in the New Testament, embodies and fulfills this calling. Ultimately, Jesus reconstitutes Israel in the church, and commissions it to continue his ministry in the world.

Therefore, Christian ministry is service offered to God through the church on behalf of its members and the world in the name of Jesus Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit and to the glory of God. Jesus serves as the source and model of all Christian ministry. His redemptive ministry on behalf of the world continued when he sent the Spirit to work in and through the church.

By virtue of baptism, every Christian is ordained for ministry. At baptism every Christian is appointed, ordered, or set apart to serve God. This is fulfilled through ministry in the church and on behalf of the world. However, in both the Old and New Testaments, certain individuals were set aside, appointed, or authorized to minister as leaders to God's people and the world.

In this course, we will examine Christian ministry from the broader perspective of every Christian being ordained for ministry at baptism. In addition, we will consider ministry from the narrower perspective of those individuals called by God and the church to provide servant-leadership.

Although gifted and empowered by the Holy Spirit, Christian ministry is demanding. In order to be adequate to the task, those called to ministerial leadership need careful preparation and thorough training. In this course, the student will be introduced to several aspects of Christian ministry. An integrative approach will be used drawing upon the resources of biblical criticism, Christian theology, church history, and certain applications from the social sciences. This will include a survey of the biblical foundation, theological outworking, and historical developments of ministry in the church. From this biblical, theological, and historical perspective, several specific aspects of pastoral ministry will be addressed as delineated in the course schedule below.

**Applicable MATS Student Outcomes from the Course Catalog**

4. The student will formulate a philosophy of ministry that relates foundational biblical and theological perspectives to the practice of ministry.

7. The student will demonstrate a readiness to function as the minister of a small congregation, or as a staff member in a larger congregation.
8. The student will display the ability to pursue further graduate education in theology and related disciplines.
9. The student will demonstrate ability to function in a lay ministry or service setting.

**Course goals:**

Through the successful completion of the course, the student will have knowledge of the biblical, theological, historical, and sociological precedents for Christian ministry. This knowledge will be gained through reading and writing assignments, lectures, seminars based on reading assignments, group projects, and case studies. All of these will lead the student toward the formation of a theology of ministry that will aid her or him in the informed and faithful practice of Christian ministry from the context of a local congregation.

**Course objectives:**

- The student will know how to exercise theological reflection in the practice of Christian ministry based upon insights drawn from relevant biblical, historical, and sociological knowledge.
- The student will be able to articulate and substantiate his or her call to ministry.
- The student will know that ministry is cruciform in nature and inherently difficult while simultaneously being very joyous and fulfilling.
- The student will know that proper attention to a holistic life is necessary in order to consistently face and address the temptations and perils inherent in pastoral ministry.
- The student will gain expertise for handling congregational conflict through applying systems theory.
- The student will be able to develop a plan for the spiritual formation of congregations through a group project using Benedictine spirituality as a model.
- The student will know the resources for and have learned strategies for basic pastoral care in multiple settings.

**Means of assessment:**

- **Journal entries** based on daily reading of Chittister's *Rule of Benedict: Insights for the Ages*. The entries are to be brief (no more than one-half page typed and single spaced). The goal of the assignment is to introduce the student to an approach to spiritual discipline and facilitate its practice through the course of the semester. In addition, it would be good for the student to be sensitive to any of the Benedictine practices that could inform and be applied to pastoral ministry in the congregation or world. Therefore, the integration of theological reflection in the entries is expected. See sample at [www.austingrad.edu/ministry](http://www.austingrad.edu/ministry) (15% of final grade).

- **Three case studies** (one due in Sessions 2, 3, and 4 respectively) that are theological reflections on selected pastoral occasions the student encountered in the weeks between class sessions. This assignment will encourage the student to embrace the dictum that every pastoral occasion is a theological opportunity. Each essay is to be 3 to 6 pages, typed and double spaced. *Part I* will be a brief description of the pastoral occasion. In *Part II*, the theological principle/s at stake will be identified with a brief description of the principle/s. *Part III* will be a critical report on how the student addressed the issue if the student offered the pastoral care or the student's critique if the student was an observer of the pastoral care being offered. Before composing your essay, use the Case Study Guide at [www.austingrad.edu/ministry](http://www.austingrad.edu/ministry) to lead you through the reflective process (15% of final grade).
- Each student will lead a class discussion in Sessions 2, 3, and 4 based on reading **assignments from Lischer's *Open Secrets***. The student leader will summarize the pastoral occasion/s described by Lischer, evaluate Lischer's theological basis for his pastoral response, and lead the class in a discussion of how this can help us address similar situations (15% of final grade).
- **Tests** administered during Sessions 2 and 3 and a final take home test. (20% of final grade).
- **Class participation.** (5% of final grade).
- Successful completion of a **group project** to design a program for congregational spiritual formation. A verbal report will be given. (15% of final grade.)
- **A critical book review** of Thompson's *Pastoral Ministry According to Paul: A Biblical Vision*. The paper is to be 10 pages or less, typed and double spaced. The paper will be in two parts. Part I will be an overview and critical to the author's understanding of ministry. Part II will be critical reflection of three things about pastoral ministry that the student will incorporate into her/his ministry. (20% of final grade).

Note: Attendance at all sessions is expected. Excused absences require notification of the instructor in a timely manner.

#### **Textbooks:**

Carroll, Jackson W. *God's Potters: Pastoral Leadership and the Shaping of Congregations*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006.

Chittister, Joan. *The Rule of Benedict: Insight for the Ages*. New York: Crossroad, 1996.

Lischer, Richard. *Open Secrets: A Spiritual Journey Through a Country Church*. New York: Doubleday, 2001.

Taylor, Brian C. *Spirituality for Everyday Living: An Adaptation of the Rule of St. Benedict*. Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1989.

Thompson, James W. *Pastoral Ministry According to Paul: A Biblical Vision*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006

Note: All assigned articles are available at [www.austingrad.edu/ministry](http://www.austingrad.edu/ministry).

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**Class Session Dates and Times:**

Session 1		
	Friday, September 18	9:00-4:00
	Saturday, September 19	9:00-1:00
Session 2		
	Friday, October 16	9:00-4:00
	Saturday, October 17	9:00-1:00
Session 3		
	Friday, November 20	9:00-4:00
	Saturday, November 21	9:00-1:00
Session 4		
	Friday, December 11	9:00-4:00
	Saturday, October 12	9:00-1:00

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**Session 1: September 18-19**

**Preparation assignments:**

Reading:

- *Rule of Benedict* daily reading.  
Wallace M. Alstron, Jr. “The Ministry of Christian Theology.” (Copies are available at [www.austingrad.edu/ministry](http://www.austingrad.edu/ministry).)
- *God’s Potters*, chapter 1.
- *Open Secrets*, chapters 1-4.

Writing:

- Submit journal entries based on *The Rule of Benedict*.
- Submit case study.

**Class Sessions:**

1. Lecture: “Putting Ministry in Perspective: Be Careful How You Build”
2. Personal Introductions.
  - a. Student—brief biography of family, vocation, conversion, faith tradition.
  - b. Instructor.
  - c. Overview of course.
    - i. Syllabus.
    - ii. Textbooks.
    - iii. Bibliography.
3. History of Ministry.
  - a. Lecture: Biblical and Historical Foundations of Ministry
  - b. Lecture: History of Ministry Forms

- c. Discussion of Carroll reading, chapter 1.
- d. Lecture: Call and Ordination.
- e. Lecture: Called or Driven? (Note: not given due to time.)
- f. Lecture/Discussion: Toward a Definition of Ministry.
- g. Titus as a model of pastoral ministry. (Note: not given due to time.)
4. Pastoral occasions as theological opportunities.
  - a. Lecture and Discussion of Alston reading assignment.
  - b. Overview of Systematic Theology.
  - c. Introduction to *Open Secrets* and explanation of assignments. Instructor will conduct a sample session based on chapters 1-4.
  - d. View movie *Tender Mercies* and discuss from the perspective of pastoral occasions as theological opportunities. (Note: not used due to time.)
5. Assignments for Session 2.
6. Test review.

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## Session 2: October 16-17

### Preparation assignments:

#### Reading:

- *Rule of Benedict* daily reading.
- *God's Potters*, chapters 5 and 6. (Note: chapter 5 added to original syllabus.)
- ADD: Eugene Peterson, "Spirituality for All the Wrong Reasons" (<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2005/march/26.42.html>).
- Steve Harper, "A Pastor's Approach to Spiritual Formation." (Copies are available at [www.austingrad.edu/ministry](http://www.austingrad.edu/ministry)).
- *Spirituality for Everyday Living* (assign teams and reading for project).
- *Open Secrets*, chapters 5-10. Student assignments for leading class discussion.

#### Writing:

- Submit journal entries based on *The Rule of Benedict*.
- Submit case study.

### Class Sessions:

1. Test.
2. Class presentation and discussion of selected journal entries.
3. Class presentation and discussion of case studies.
4. Lecture: "Maintaining Balance: A Holistic Understanding of Life and Ministry."
5. Discussion of Peterson and Harper article.
6. Discussion of reading assignment from *God's Potters*.
7. Leveraging Leadership exercise.
8. Community formation lectures.
  - a. Christian community formation by the Jerusalem church in Acts.
  - b. Benedict's approach to Christian community formation.
  - c. Bonhoeffer's approach to Christian community formation (including documentary film).
9. Group project based on *Spirituality for Everyday Living*.

10. View movie *Places in the Heart*\* and discuss from the perspective of pastoral occasions as theological opportunities.
11. Assignments for Session 3.
12. Test review.

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### **Session 3: November 20-21**

#### **Preparation Assignments:**

##### Reading:

- *Rule of Benedict* daily reading.
- *God's Potters*, chapters 2, 3, and 4. DELETE 5
- Bellah, "History of Habit." See [www.austingrad.edu/ministry](http://www.austingrad.edu/ministry).
- Kersten, "To Hell with Sin." See [www.austingrad.edu/ministry](http://www.austingrad.edu/ministry).
- Miroslav Volf, "Soft Difference: Theological Reflections on the Relation Between the Church and Culture in 1 Peter," See <http://www.yale.edu/faith/downloads>.
- *Open Secrets*, chapters 11-16. Student assignments for leading class discussion.

##### Writing:

- Submit journal entries based on *The Rule of Benedict*.
- Submit case study.

#### **Class Sessions:**

1. Test.
2. Discussion of "To Hell with Sin."
3. Lecture on "Whatever Became of Sin."
4. Ministry as a Countercultural Project: Perspectives from 1 Peter.
5. Discussion of congregational and pastoral culture based on *God's Potters* and Bellah article.
6. Systems Theory.
  - a. Lecture.
  - b. Case studies presented by instructor.
  - c. Discussion.
  - d. ADD: Student examples of anxiety and triangles.
7. View movie *Romero* and discuss from the perspective of pastoral occasions as theological opportunities.
8. Student reports and discussion of select journal entries based on *The Rule of Benedict*.
9. Student reports and discussion of case studies.
10. Assignments for Session 4.
11. Test review.

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### **Session 4: December 11-12**

#### **Preparation Assignments:**

##### Reading:

- *Rule of Benedict* daily reading.

- *God's Potters*, chapters 7 and 8.
- *Open Secrets*, chapters 17-22. Student assignments for leading class discussion.
- Submit book review.

Writing:

- Submit journal entries based on *The Rule of Benedict*.
- Submit case study.

**Class Sessions:**

1. Anatomy of Pastoral Ministry.
  - a. Worship (including video "In the Name of God.")
  - b. Accountability to congregational leadership.
  - c. Visitation to.
    - i. Visitors and members.
    - ii. The hospital.
    - iii. The terminally ill.
    - iv. The grieving.
  - d. Funerals.
  - e. Crisis care.
  - f. Weddings.
  - g. Evangelism.
  - h. Discipling.
  - i. Counseling.
  - j. Public events.
  - k. Finances.
2. Class presentation and discussion of selected journal entries.
3. Class presentation and discussion of case studies.
4. Take home test due to [reid@austingrad.edu](mailto:reid@austingrad.edu) on or before December 16.