Ministry 6301: Introduction to Christian Ministry
Austin Graduate School of Theology
Fall 2015

Syllabus

Instructor:
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Course description of MIN 6301 from the AGST Catalog 2014-2016:

A comprehensive overview of the work of the Christian minister, including biblical and
theological foundations of ministry, aspects of ministerial practice, and disciplines appropriate to the
vocation of Christian service.

Detailed course description of MIN 6301 from the instructor:

Early in the biblical narrative God called a people to be servants in God’s work to redeem a
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 the church to
continue his ministry in the world.

Christian ministry will be examined 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 the church to provide servant-leadership.

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. From this biblical, theological, and historical perspective,
pastoral ministry will be addressed as delineated in the course schedule below.

MATS Student Outcomes from the Course Catalog:

1. The student will interpret passages of the Old and New Testaments in light of their literary,
   historical, and theological contexts.
2. The student will articulate the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith, reflecting knowledge
   of major theological traditions (e.g., Catholic, Orthodox, Lutheran, Reformed, Methodist, Baptist,
   Stone-Campbell).
3. The student will demonstrate a readiness to serve as a minister or lay teacher as informed by
   biblical and theological understanding of ministry.
4. The student will prepare papers, sermons, classes, and other assignments, employing research
   tools such as bibliographic indices and databases in biblical and theological studies (ATLA
   Religion Index, NT/OT Abstracts, etc.).
Course goals:

Through the successful completion of the course, the student will have a basic knowledge of important biblical, theological, historical, and sociological precedents for the understanding of and practice of Christian ministry. This knowledge will be gained through reading and writing assignments, lectures, class discussions based on reading assignments and lectures, a group project, case studies, and a critical book review of a pastoral memoir. All of these will help the student progress in the development of skills so that the student will better recognize the theological opportunities presented in pastoral occasions. This will aid her or him in thoughtful, compassionate, and faithful practice of Christian ministry in the context of a local congregation.

Course objectives:

- The student will know that keeping one’s life in balance is especially critical in the life of a minister. Careful and constant attention to at least four interrelated areas of one’s being (physical, intellectual, spiritual, and emotional) is necessary in order to consistently face and address the temptations and perils inherent in pastoral ministry.

- The student will explore the implications of ministerial calling, vocation, and ordination in light of biblical and historical considerations.

- The student will know how to exercise theological reflection in the practice of Christian ministry based upon insights drawn from relevant sources in the biblical, historical, theological, and social science disciplines.

- The student will gain skills for addressing congregational conflict through applying systems theory.

- The student will learn to write a pulpit prayer that is theologically sound and pastorally sensitive.

- The student will learn to develop a plan for the spiritual formation of congregations through a group project using Benedictine spirituality as a model.

- The student will learn strategies for basic pastoral care in multiple settings.

- The student will become familiar with a number of bibliographical resources to aid in one’s practice of ministry.

Means of assessment:

Note: Graduate-level work requires careful writing. Grading of the writing assignments will include assessment of sentence structure, grammar, and spelling. On all submitted work include your name, the class session number, and date due at the top of the page.

- The book, Open Secrets, will be used to stimulate theological reflection about the pastoral occasions described by Lischer. Students are expected to participate in class discussion of the reading assignments and to read from the perspective of what pastoral occasions are at work, what theological opportunities are presented, and a critique of the process as it unfolds in the stories. Quizzes covering the reading assignments will be given. (20% of final grade).
• **Exams:** There will be two exams. A mid-term exam will be taken on **Oct 8.** The final exam will be taken on **Dec 10. (30% of final grade).**

• **Group project:** There will be a group project based on Taylor’s *Spirituality for Everyday Living.* The class will be divided into groups of three. Each group will submit a paper (8-12 pages total) based on the reading assignment and project concept. The paper will have two parts. **Part I** will be a summary and theological reflection on the *Rule of Benedict* drawn from the Taylor reading assignment. Each group member should read the Preface, Introduction, Appendix, and an assigned chapter (the three chapters of Taylor’s book should be assigned to different members who will contribute a 2-3 page typed and doubled-spaced section for the paper that summarizes the assigned chapter and offers theological reflection). For **Part II,** the group will work together to develop a project that would make practical application of the *Rule of Benedict* in the life of the church (e.g., a retreat for a specific subgroup within the church, a series of classes for the education program, etc.). Be creative. **Part III** will be the description of the proposed project. Group reports will be given during class on **Oct. 15.** The group will choose a leader who is responsible to oversee the work of the group. Another group member, the writer, will be appointed to assimilate the contributions of other group members into the final form of the paper. A third member, the presenter, will be appointed to make a class presentation of the group’s practical project. **(10% of final grade).**

• **A Case Study:** On **Oct. 29** each student will submit a report on a pastoral occasion they have experienced or witnessed. The report should integrate theological reflection and systems theory, and use Lischer’s model in *Open Secrets.* 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 that or those principle/s. **Part III** will be a report on how the situation was addressed. The critique in **Part III** could be from two perspectives. 1) If the student offered the pastoral care, the student will offer a self-evaluation. 2) If the student was an observer of the pastoral care being offered, she or he is to do an objective third-party critique. **(10% of final grade).** For guidance, see the Case Study Guide at the end of this syllabus (Addendum 1, page 10).

• **A Pulpit/Pastoral Prayer** will be submitted on **Nov 5.** It is to be typed, doubled-spaced and no longer than two pages. You can use the prayers in *The Book of Common Worship* ([http://bookoforder.info/Book-of-Common-Worship.pdf](http://bookoforder.info/Book-of-Common-Worship.pdf); see the Contents page and notice pp. 87ff, and “Prayers for Various Occasions starting on p. 787) as a resource. **(10% of final grade).**

• **Book Review:** A 10-page critical book review of *The Pastor: A Memoir* by Eugene Peterson will be submitted on **Dec 10.** The book review should be in three parts with a brief introduction and conclusion:

1. The effect the book had on your understanding and practice of ministry.
2. Similarities to and differences from Lischer’s pastoral memoir.

On the honor system, the student is expected to confirm at the conclusion of the review that the student read the entire book. Students will participate in a seminar discussion of the assignment during class. **(15% of final grade).**
• Class Participation: This class is designed to encourage student participation. It is recognized that not every student easily joins public discourse. In order to promote an open and safe environment for constructive dialogue, expectations for class participation include respectful verbal interchange and no individual dominating the discussion (5% of final grade).

Note: Attendance at all sessions is expected. Excused absences require notification to the instructor in a timely manner. Each unexcused absence will result in a 5% reduction in the student’s grade.

Textbooks:

Wallace Alston, The Power to Comprehend with All the Saints (PTC).

Richard Lischer, Open Secrets.

Margaret Marcuson, Leaders Who Last: Sustaining Yourself and Your Ministry.


Brian C. Taylor, Spirituality for Everyday Living.

Assignments:

1) Reading Assignments: All articles and essays for reading assignments beyond those in the required book list will be available in the library or through the instructor. Any copyrighted material provided by the instructor is intended for the sole use of students in MIN 6301. Such material should be used with respect to all applicable copyright laws.

2) Writing Assignments: All writing assignments, including the exams, are to be typed and double-spaced.

Plagiarism and Citation of Sources:

Plagiarism is the representation of another person’s work as your own and is a form of theft. This includes material composed by other students, purchased from an online paper mill, copied from published books and articles, or taken from the Internet. If, in any assignment you employ material written by someone else, you must give the author proper credit, documenting the source with an appropriate citation and marking any words directly quoted with quotation marks (or with indentation if four or more lines are quoted). Failure to appropriately credit the sources you use will result in a reduction of your grade for the assignment in question and/or the requirement that you revise the assignment. Intentionally representing another person’s work as your own will be grounds for academic discipline, including your possible dismissal from the School. For more information on how to acknowledge sources properly and avoid plagiarism, refer to the School’s “Guide for Written Work” (see www.austingrad.edu/images/Resources/student/guide_for_written_work.htm).

Note: The professor reserves the right to adjust this syllabus as the course progresses. Students will be given notice of any adjustments and are responsible to mark such changes in the syllabus.
Class Schedule

Session 1—Aug 27: Christian Ministry: Introduction to MIN 6301

1. Introduction to the course, review syllabus, and get acquainted.
2. Lecture: Be Careful How You Build.
3. A holistic view of the person in ministry: Attending to the spiritual, physical, intellectual, and social dimensions of our lives.
   a. Building good habits (intellectual, physical, spiritual, emotional).
   b. Setting goals for developing good habits for the semester and a lifetime.
   c. Notice how the Marcuson reading assignment for the next session applies to this.
4. Overview of Praying with the Psalms.
5. Group Project assignments (due Oct 15). Assign groups.

Session 2—Sept 3: Christian Ministry: Call, Ordination, Character

Assignments for this session:
1. Note: all reading assignments in the syllabus should be accompanied by reading notes to use in class discussions. The instructor reserves the right to review the notes at any time.
3. Reading assignments from PTC:
   a. PTC, pp. 183-202—“The Call of a Lifetime.”
   b. Alston, “The Ministry of Christian Theology” (See “Supplemental Reading” in Addendum 2, p. 11; copies of supplemental reading are available).

Session Agenda:
1. Discuss “Say Your Prayers” by Marcuson.
2. Lecture and Discussion: Ministerial Calling, Vocation and Ordination.
4. Discuss pastoral occasions as theological opportunities as developed in Alston’s essay, “The Ministry of Christian Theology.”
5. Bibliography.

Session 3—Sept 10: Christian Ministry as Theological Praxis

Assignments for this session:
1. Lischer, chapters 1-2.
2. PTC reading:
   a. PTC, xi-xiv, “Preface.”
   b. PTC, pp. 281-294—“Formed by a Lifetime of Theological Reflection and Study.”

Session Agenda:
1. Discussion of PTC reading assignments.
2. Lecture: The Cruciform Nature of Ministry based on the travel narrative of Mark’s gospel.
3. Discussion of Lischer reading.
Session 4—Sept 17: Christian Ministry as Community Building (1)

Assignments for this session:
1. Lischer, chapters 3-4.

Session Agenda:
1. Lecture: Building Community: Learning from the Jerusalem Church in Acts, Paul’s Mission, Benedict of Nursia, and Bonhoeffer (video?).
2. Discussion of Lischer reading.
3. Discussion of Marcuson reading.

Session 5—Sept 24: Christian Ministry as Community Building (2)

Assignments for this session:
1. Lischer, chapters 5-6.
3. Work on group project using Taylor (see above under “Means of Assessment”).

Session Agenda:
1. Discussion of Marcuson reading.
2. Discussion of Lischer reading.

Session 6—Oct 1: Judgment and Grace

Assignments for this session:
1. Lischer, chapters 7-8.
2. PTC, pp. 147-162—“Of Struggle, Surrender, and Spirit.”

Session Agenda:
2. Review and discuss PTC reading assignment.
3. Introduction to Systems Theory.
4. Discussion of Lischer reading.
5. Review Mid-term Exam.
Session 7—Oct 8: Mid-term Exam

Session 8—Oct 15: Christian Ministry and Systems Theory (1)

Assignments for this session:
1. Group Project Reports.
2. Lischer, chapters 9-10.
5. Be thinking of a pastoral occasion to use as your Case Study.

Session Agenda:
1. Group Project Reports.
2. Discussion of “A Tale of Two Churches.”
3. Discussion of Marcuson reading.
4. Discussion of Lischer reading.
5. Bibliography.

Session 9—Oct 22: Christian Ministry and Systems Theory (2)

Assignments for this session:
1. Lischer, chapter 11.
3. Work on your Case Study (due Oct. 29).

Session Agenda:
1. Discussion of Case Studies.
2. Discussion of Lischer reading.
3. Discussion of Marcuson reading.

Session 10—Oct 29: Christian Ministry and Leading Worship

Assignments for this session:
2. Thomas E. Bergler, “When Are We Going to Grow Up?” (See “Supplemental Reading, Addendum 2, p. 11).
3. PTC, pp. 337-351—“The Pastoral Prayer as Theological Occasion.”
4. Turn in Case Studies (see guideline at end of syllabus).

Session Agenda:
1. Discussion of Lischer reading.
2. Discussion of “When Are We Going to Grow Up?”
3. Discussion of “The Pastoral Prayer as Theological Occasion.”
4. The “Lord’s Prayer” as a model for prayer.
5. Overview of Worship Resources.
   a. The lectionary.
b. Introduction to the Book of Common Worship.
c. Introduction to The Worship Sourcebook.
d. Overview of Timeless: Ancient Psalms for the Church Today.


Session 11—Nov 5: Ministry as Teaching, Preaching, Evangelism

Assignments for this session:
1. Write pastoral prayer (see guideline above).
2. PTC, pp. 221-236—“The Recovery of Theological Preaching.”

Session Agenda:
1. Read and discuss student pastoral prayers.
2. Discussion of “The Recovery of Theological Preaching.”
3. Discussion of “The Role of the Pastor-Theologian in the Evangelization of the Church…”
4. Introduction to Wilson’s Four Pages Model.
5. Evangelism: Attractional vs Missional Churches.
6. Discussion of Lischer reading.

Session 12—Nov 12: Christian Ministry: Leadership, Pastoral Ethics, and Administration

Assignments for this session:
1. PTC, pp. 272-280—“The Theological Significance of Administration.”
2. Sharyl Peterson, pp. 10-22—“Being in Right Relationship” (see “Supplemental Reading” in Addendum 2, p. 11).
4. Lischer, chapters 16-17.

Session Agenda:
1. Discussion of the Lischer reading.
2. Discussion of “The Theological Significance of Administration.”
3. Discussion of “Being in Right Relationship.”
4. Discussion of Marcuson reading.
5. Leadership Style Assessment.

Session 13—Nov 19: Ministry as Pastoral Care (1)

Assignment for this session:
1. Lischer, chapters 18-19.

Session Agenda:
1. Discussion of Lischer reading.
2. Marriage and Family.
a. Premarital counseling.
b. Weddings.
c. *Book of Common Worship* as a resource.
d. Dedication ceremonies.
e. Family counseling.
3. Pastoral counseling and knowing when and how to refer.
4. Services of Baptismal Reaffirmation.
5. Bibliography.

**Nov 26: No Class and Happy Thanksgiving**

**Session 14—Dec 3: Ministry as Pastoral Care (2)**

**Assignments for this session:**
1. Lischer, chapters 20-22.
2. PTC, pp. 255-271—“On Not Offering Psychological Banalities as God’s Word: A Reformed Perspective on Pastoral Care.”

**Session Agenda:**
1. Discussion of “On Not Offering Psychological Banalities as God’s Word.”
2. Discussion of “What Broke My Father’s Heart.”
3. Discussion of Lischer reading.
4. Pastoral visitation to the sick and dying, and their loved ones.
5. Hospice as a resource in ministry.
6. Funerals.
   a. Visitation and planning with the loved ones.
   b. The funeral service. *A Trumpet in the Darkness*.
   c. Pastoral care afterwards.

**Session 15—Dec 10:**

**Assignments for this session:**

**Session Agenda: Final Exam**
Addenda for AGST MIN 6301-15

Addendum 1

Guide for Case Studies

The following should be helpful as you choose an event/pastoral occasion, and serve as a guide as you write your report of the case study. It is taken from Appendix C in Practical Theology in Action: Christian Thinking in the Service of Church and Society by Paul Ballard and John Pritchard (pp. 197-198).

Significant event account

A ‘significant event’ [pastoral occasion] in this context is an event in which you were involved and for which you had some responsibility, which caused for you anxiety, bewilderment, hard thinking or pleasure.

For Part I

1. Context: give sufficient background to the event for it to be understandable.
2. Description: describe what happened and how you were feeling about it at the time.

For Part II

3. Analysis:
   a. Personal reflection: why do you think you felt as you did? And others as they did?
   b. Social reflection: what other social and structural factors were involved, if any? I.e. what wider concerns and issues were actually present, though not articulated?
   c. Theological reflection: what theological issues were at stake? What passages of Scripture or what doctrines help you to make sense of the event now?
      i. [Was there a particular sin or spiritual issue at work? E.g., use the Seven Deadly Sins as a template to look for a sin issue/s.]
      ii. [Is there a particular Christian grace that is present or lacking? E.g., look at the Christian graces in Paul’s list of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23).]

For Part III

4. Evaluation: assess how you handled the event or reacted to it. What did you learn from it, and what decisions do you need to make for your future action in similar or other situations?
Supplemental Reading List

Note: Copies of supplemental reading are available in the David Worley Library.


Thomas E. Bergler, “When Are We Going to Grow Up?” in *Christianity Today* (June 2012).

Sharyl Peterson, “Being in Right Relationship” in *The Indispensable Guide to Pastoral Care*.