

Ministry 6301: Introduction to Christian Ministry
Austin Graduate School of Theology
Fall 2016

Syllabus

Instructor:

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Course description of MIN 6301 from the AGST Catalog 2016-2018:

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 case study, 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 challenges and opportunities, as well as the temptations and perils inherent in pastoral ministry.
- The student will explore the implications of ministerial calling, vocation, and ordination in light of biblical, ecclesial, 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 application of the principles of Family Systems Theory.
- The student will learn to write a pulpit prayer that is theologically sound and pastorally sensitive.
- The student will learn how to adapt and use lessons learned from Benedictine spirituality as an aid to spiritual formation.
- 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.

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*.

Eugene Peterson, *The Pastor: A Memoir*.

Brian C. Taylor, *Spirituality for Everyday Living*.

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.**

- **Session 2—Sept 12.** Attend the First Things Lecture in lieu of a class meeting and submit a 5-page reflective paper on the reading assignment, or not attend the First Things Lecture, but submit a 15-page reflective paper on the reading assignments for this session. **(10% of final grade).**
- **Quizzes: Reading assignments** will be used to stimulate theological reflection about the pastoral occasions. 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 and what theological opportunities are presented. Critical thinking skills should be used in this process. 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 17**. The final exam will be taken on **Dec 15**. **(30% of final grade).**
- **A Case Study:** On **Nov 7** students 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. For guidance, see the Case Study Guide at the end of this syllabus (Addendum 1, page 10). **(10% of final grade).**
- **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>; 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 **Nov 28**. 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.
 3. Your critical evaluation of the book.

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.

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 29: 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. Bibliography.

Labor Day—Sept 5.

Session 2—Sept 12: Christian Ministry: Call, Ordination, Character

NOTE: Austin Grad will be hosting the second First Things Lecture in Austin at 7:00 PM at the University Church of Christ, 1903 University Avenue. For information visit firstthings.com/austin.

The student has two options for this session:

1. Attend the First Things Lecture and discussion of *Reformed Catholicism* presented by Peter Leithart on the evening of this class session. Sign in with the professor (or designated staff member) at the beginning and end of the session.
2. Not attend the lecture and write a 15-page (double-spaced) reflection paper on the reading assignments for this session.

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.
2. Marcuson, chapter 10. Bring your goals for building good habits.
3. Reading assignments:
 - 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).

Session Agenda: (*canceled due to First Things Lecture*).

1. Discuss "Say Your Prayers" by Marcuson.
2. Discussion: Ministerial Calling, Vocation and Ordination.
3. Lecture and Discussion: Who Needs Theology?/Overview of Systematic Theology.
4. Discuss pastoral occasions as theological opportunities as developed in Alston's essay, "The Ministry of Christian Theology."
5. Bibliography.

Session 3—Sept 19: 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. Ministerial calling, vocation and ordination.
2. Discussion of PTC reading assignments.
3. Lecture: The Cruciform Nature of Ministry based on the travel narrative of Mark’s gospel.
4. Discussion of Lischer reading.
5. Bibliography.

Session 4—Sept 26: Christian Ministry as Community Building (1)

Assignments for this session:

1. Lischer, chapters 3-4.
2. Marcuson, chapters 1-2.
3. Taylor, Introduction and chapter 1.

Session Agenda:

1. Lecture: Building Community: Learning from the Jerusalem Church in Acts, Paul’s Mission, Benedict of Nursia, and Bonhoeffer.
2. Discussion of Lischer reading.
3. Discussion of Marcuson reading.
4. Discussion of Taylor reading.
5. Bibliography.

Session 5—Oct 3: Christian Ministry as Community Building (2)

Assignments for this session:

1. Lischer, chapters 5-6.
2. Marcuson, chapters 3-4.
3. Taylor, chapter 2.

Session Agenda:

1. Discussion of Marcuson reading.
2. Discussion of Lischer reading.
3. Discussion of Taylor reading.
4. Bibliography.

Session 6—Oct 10: Judgment and Grace

Assignments for this session:

1. Lischer, chapters 7-8.
2. PTC, pp. 147-162—“Of Struggle, Surrender, and Spirit.”
3. Kersten, “To Hell with Sin.” <http://www.imarc.cc/edit/wallstreet1.html>
4. Turner, “An Unworkable Theology.” <http://www.firstthings.com/article/2005/06/an-unworkable-theology>
5. Taylor, chapter 3 and Appendix.

Session Agenda:

1. Discussion of Kersten, “To Hell with Sin,” and Turner, “An Unworkable Theology.”
2. Review and discuss PTC reading assignment.
3. Introduction to Systems Theory.
4. Discussion of Lischer reading.
5. Discussion of Taylor reading.
6. Review Mid-term Exam.
7. Bibliography.

Session 7—Oct 17.

1. Mid-term Exam.
2. Intro to Family Systems Theory.

Session 8—Oct 24: Christian Ministry and Family Systems Theory (1)

Assignments for this session:

1. Lischer, chapters 9-10.
2. Richardson, “When Bad Things Happen in Good Churches” (See “Supplemental Reading” in Addendum 2, p. 11).
3. Marcuson, chapter 5.
4. Be thinking of a pastoral occasion to use as your Case Study. (See guideline at end of this syllabus.)

Session Agenda:

1. Discussion of “When Bad Things Happen in Good Churches.”
2. Discussion of Marcuson reading.
3. Discussion of Lischer reading.
4. Bibliography.

Session 9—Oct 31: Christian Ministry and Family Systems Theory (2)

Assignments for this session:

1. Lischer, chapter 11.
2. Marcuson, chapters 8-9.
3. Work on your Case Study (due Nov. 7; See guideline at the end of this syllabus).

Session Agenda:

1. Systems Theory discussion continued.
2. Discussion of Lischer reading.
3. Discussion of Marcuson reading.
4. Bibliography.

Session 10—Nov 7: Christian Ministry and Leading Worship**Assignments for this session:**

1. Case Studies due.
2. Lischer, chapters 12-13.
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 Case Studies in light of Family Systems Theory.
2. Discussion of Lischer reading.
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*.
6. Bibliography.

Session 11—Nov 14: Ministry as Teaching, Preaching, Evangelism

Note: The professor must be out of town for a meeting on this date and class will not meet. In lieu of the class session, the student is to fulfill assignment # 5 below.

Assignments for this session:

1. Write pastoral prayer (see guideline above).
2. PTC, pp. 221-236—"The Recovery of Theological Preaching."
3. Lischer, chapters 14-15.
4. PTC, pp. 322-336—"The Role of the Pastor-Theologian in the Evangelization of the Church: A Wesleyan/Methodist Way Forward."
5. At Session 12 the student is to submit notes taken from the reading assignments for the session.

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. Evangelism: Attractional vs Missional Churches.
5. Discussion of Lischer reading.
6. Bibliography.

Session 12—Nov 21: Christian Ministry: Leadership, Pastoral Ethics, and Administration

Assignments for this session:

1. Submit notes taken from reading assignments for Session 11.
2. PTC, pp. 272-280—"The Theological Significance of Administration."
3. Sharyl Peterson, pp. 10-22—"Being in Right Relationship" (see "Supplemental Reading" in Addendum 2, p. 11).
4. Marcuson, chapter 6.
5. 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.
6. Bibliography.

Session 13—Nov 28: Ministry as Pastoral Care (1)

Assignment for this session:

1. Lischer, chapters 18-22.
2. PTC, pp. 255-271—"On Not Offering Psychological Banalities as God's Word."
3. Katy Butler—"What Broke My Father's Heart" (See "Supplemental Reading" in Addendum 2, p. 11).
4. Submit book review of *The Pastor* by Eugene Peterson.

Session Agenda:

1. Discussion of Lischer reading.
2. Discussion of "On Not Offering Psychological Banalities as God's Word: A Reformed Perspective on Pastoral Care."
3. Discussion of "What Broke My Father's Heart"

Session 14—Dec 5: Final Exam

Addenda for AGST MIN 6301-16

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?

Addendum 2

Supplemental Reading List

Note: A master copy of the supplemental readings are available for you to copy for personal use in the David Worley Library.

Wallace Alston, Jr., “The Ministry of Christian Theology” in *Theology in Service of the Church*.

Ronald W. Richardson, “Introduction: When Bad Things Happen in Good Churches” in *Creating a Healthier Church: Family Systems Theory, Leadership and Congregational Life*.

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

Katy Butler, “What Broke My Father’s Heart” in *The Best American Essays* (2011).