

Ministry 6301: Introduction to Christian Ministry
Austin Graduate School of Theology
Fall 2017

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 learn how to adapt and use lessons learned from Benedictine spirituality as an aid to spiritual formation.
- 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 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.

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).

Kelly M. Kapic, *A Little Book for New Theologians: Why and How to Study Theology*.

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:

- **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. **(15% of final grade)**.
- **Exams:** There will be two exams. A mid-term exam will be taken on **Oct 12**. The final exam will be taken on **Dec 14**. **(30% of final grade)**.
- **Reports on Kopic reading assignments:** For each reading assignment from Kopic, *A Little Book for New Theologians*, write a 2 -3 page (double-spaced) reflection paper. **(10% of final grade)**.
- **Rule of Benedict Report and Project:** On **Sept 28**, a 10-15 page (double-spaced) report will be presented on. It will have three sections. Section 1 will be a brief overview of the life of Benedict of Nursia. Section 2 will summarize Taylor's adaptation of the Rule of the Benedict for non-monastics. Section 3 will conceive and describe a project designed to incorporate the Rule of Benedict in the life of a congregation. **(15% of final grade)**.
- **A Pulpit/Pastoral Prayer** will be submitted on **Nov 9**. 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 30**. 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: 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. Multiple pages should be stapled or clipped together.

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

Note: All articles and essays for reading assignments beyond those in the required textbook list are available at <http://www.austingrad.edu/ministry/2017/> and are marked by an * in the assignments below. 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.*

Session 1—Aug 31: Christian Ministry: Introduction to MIN 6301

Assignment for this session:

1. *Read the chapter from Bo Giertz, "The Call" in *The Hammer of God*, pp. 3-42.

Session Agenda:

1. Introduction to the course, review syllabus, and get acquainted.
2. Christian ministry defined.
3. Discussion of "The Call" by Bo Giertz.
4. 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.
 - d. Overview of *Praying with the Psalms*.
5. Lecture: Be Careful How You Build.
6. Bibliography.

Session 2—Sept 7: 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.
2. Reading assignments:
 - a. Marcuson, chapter 10. Develop and submit a list of goals for building good habits.
 - b. PTC, pp. 183-202—“The Call of a Lifetime.”
 - c. *Alston, “The Ministry of Christian Theology.”
3. 2-3 page essay on Kopic, “Acknowledgements” and chapter 1.

Session Agenda:

1. Discussion of “Say Your Prayers” by Marcuson and your personal goals for developing good habits.
2. Discussion: Ministerial Calling, Vocation and Ordination based on the “The Call of a Lifetime.”
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 14: 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.”
3. 2-3 page essay on Kopic, chapter 2.

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 21: Christian Ministry as Community Building (1)

Assignments for this session:

1. Lischer, chapters 3-4.
2. Marcuson, chapters 1-2.
3. 4-6 page essay on Kopic, chapters 3-4.

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. Bibliography.

Session 5—Sept 28: Christian Ministry as Community Building (2)

NOTE: The class will not meet for this session because the professor will be out of town.

Assignments for this session: Write a 10-15 page (double-spaced) paper on Benedict and His Rule. It will be in three parts. Part 1 is to be a brief summary of Benedict of Nursia and the development of his Rule (2-3 pages). Part 2 will be a summation and reflection on Taylor's *Spirituality for Everyday Living* (4-6 pages). Part 3 will be conceiving and describing a practical project in which the Benedict and Taylor could be used to enhance building community in the life of a congregation (4-6 pages).

Session 6—Oct 5: Judgment and Grace

Assignments for this session:

1. Lischer, chapters 5-6.
2. Marcuson, chapters 3-4.
3. PTC, pp. 147-162—"Of Struggle, Surrender, and Spirit."
4. *Kersten, "To Hell with Sin."
5. 2-3 page essay on Kopic, chapter 7.

Session Agenda:

1. Discussion of Kersten, "To Hell with Sin."
2. Moralistic Therapeutic Deism.
3. Review and discuss PTC reading assignment.
4. Discussion of Lischer reading.
5. Discussion of Marcuson reading.
6. Review Mid-term Exam.
7. Bibliography.

Session 7—Oct 12: Christian Ministry and Family Systems Theory.

Assignments for this session:

1. Lischer, chapters 7-8.
2. *Richardson, "When Bad Things Happen in Good Churches."
3. Marcuson, chapter 5.
4. 2-3 page essay on Kopic, chapter 5.

Session Agenda:

1. Discussion of "When Bad Things Happen in Good Churches."
2. Introduction to Family Systems Theory.
3. Discussion of Marcuson reading.
4. Discussion of Lischer reading.
5. Bibliography.

Session 8—Oct 19: Midterm Exam

Session 9—Oct 26: Christian Ministry and Family Systems Theory

Assignments for this session:

1. Lischer, chapter 9-10.
2. Marcuson, chapter 6.

3. 2-3 page essay on Kopic, chapter 6.

Session Agenda:

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

Session 10—Nov 2: Christian Ministry and Corporate Worship

Assignments for this session:

1. Lischer, chapter 11.
2. Marcuson, chapter 8.
3. PTC, pp. 337-351—"The Pastoral Prayer as Theological Occasion."
4. *Stookey, "Lectionary and the Christian Year" in *The New Interpreter's Handbook of Preaching*, pp. 321-325.
5. 2-3 page essay on Kopic, chapter 8.

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 9: Ministry as Teaching, Preaching, Evangelism

Assignments for this session:

1. Write pastoral prayer (1-2 pages double-spaced).
2. PTC, pp. 221-236—"The Recovery of Theological Preaching."
3. Lischer, chapters 12-13.
4. PTC, pp. 322-336—"The Role of the Pastor-Theologian in the Evangelization of the Church: A Wesleyan/Methodist Way Forward."
5. 2-3 page essay on Kopic, chapter 9.

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 16: 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."
4. Marcuson, chapter 7.
5. Lischer, chapters 14-15.
6. 2-3 page essay on Kopic, chapter 10

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.

Nov 23: Thanksgiving Break

Session 13—Nov 30: Ministry as Pastoral Care

Assignment for this session:

1. Lischer, chapters 16-17.
2. PTC, pp. 255-271—"On Not Offering Psychological Banalities as God's Word."
3. *Katy Butler—"What Broke My Father's Heart."
4. Submit book review of *The Pastor* by Eugene Peterson.
5. Bibliography.

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 7: Concluding Matters

Assignment for this session:

1. Lischer, chapters 18-22.
2. Marcuson, chapter 9

Session Agenda:

1. Discussion of Lischer reading.
2. Discussion of Marcuson reading.
3. Review of MIN 6301.
4. Final matters.
5. Review for the Final Exam.

Session 15—Dec 14: Final Exam