

Wesley Theological Seminary

CS 524: Theological Reflection: Practice of Ministry

Course of Study

July 11-15, 2016

Dr. Beverly E. Mitchell, Instructor

Contact Information for Dr. Mitchell

Office Hours: By appointment

Office Location: Straughn Hall, SG-23

Office Telephone No.: (202) 885-6484

E-Mail Address: bmitchell@wesleyseminary.edu

The best way to reach Dr. Mitchell outside of class time is to contact her by email. Generally, she will respond within 24 hours.

Course Goals

This course is designed to provide an opportunity for local pastors to strengthen their knowledge of basic doctrines of the Christian faith and to help them to refine their skills in theological reflection with an eye toward deepening students' understanding of how Christian doctrines inform and shape life both inside and outside the community of faith.

Course Objectives

The following objectives are intended to help students attain these goals:

- to experience a sustained discussion of basic Christian doctrines;
- to learn some of the historical background that lead to the development of Christian doctrines;
- to practice the art of theological reflection by responding to questions designed to enable one to establish how doctrine shapes the life of the congregation; and
- to gain further understanding of the relationship of doctrine to concrete experiences that challenge persons of faith.

It is expected that at the end of the course students will have developed a deeper understanding of some of the central doctrines of the Christian faith and will have refined their skill in theological reflection to enable them to clarify the theology which governs their ministry endeavors.

Required Texts

Will Willimon, *Pastor: The Theology and Practice of Ordained Ministry*

Kathleen Cahalan, *Introducing the Practice of Ministry*

Charles Wood and Ellen Blue, *Attentive to God: Thinking Theologically in Ministry*

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together: The Classic Exploration of Christian Community*

Course Requirements

Students will be evaluated based on their performance in the following areas:

- (1) Attendance at all class meetings.
- (2) Full participation in class discussions and exercises.
- (3) Two 8 to 10-page papers on two of the assigned texts.

FIRST WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT

An 8-10-page paper, (not including endnotes or footnotes, and bibliography), on some aspect of the nature of what it means to be a 21st century pastor based upon your reflection on Will Willimon's discussion in *Pastor: The Theology and Practice of Ordained Ministry*, pp. 27-109. You are encouraged to incorporate your own experience as a pastor in this reflection. **This first assignment is due at our first class meeting (Tuesday, July 12).**

SECOND WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT

An 8-10-page paper, (not including endnotes or footnotes, and bibliography), on any three (3) of the "Incidents and Situations" addressed in Part II of Charles M. Wood and Ellen Blue, *Attentive to God, Thinking Theologically in Ministry*, pp. 25-107.

NOTE WELL: Students must read Part I, pp. 3-24, from Wood and Blue before working on this assignment on theological reflection. Your paper should reflect your familiarity with Part I. As in the previous written assignment, you are encouraged to incorporate insights from your own spiritual journey, your pastoral context and experiences in the practice of ministry. **This second assignment is due at our next to the last class meeting (Wednesday, July 20).**

FINAL READING ASSIGNMENT

Dietrich Bonhoeffer's *Life Together* (entire text) should be read by our final class meeting (Thursday, July 21). Students should be prepared to discuss this text in class on that day.

Schedule of Classes and Topics

- July 12** **General and Special Revelation, Attributes of God**
- How we know God
 - In what kind of God do we believe
- July 13** **The Doctrine of the Trinity**
- The Trinitarian controversy
 - Understanding God as Triune
- July 14** **The Person of Christ**
- The Christological controversy
 - The Significance of the Incarnation
- July 15** **The Work of Christ**
- The Death and Resurrection of Christ (Atonement)
- July 18** **Creation and Humanity**
- What it means to be human
 - What our relationship is to creation
- July 19** **Theodicy and the Problem of Evil**
- Providence
 - Wrestling with evil in the good creation
 -
- July 20** **The Holy Spirit and New Life**
- The Holy Spirit, giver of life
 - Justification and Sanctification (Wesley's order of salvation)
 -
- July 21** **The Church as Community**
- What is community
 - Bonhoeffer on community (discussion of Bonhoeffer's *Life Together* (entire text))