

Wesley Theological Course of Study Program
July 2017
Term 1 | July 10-20, 2017

Course: CS-524 Theological Reflection: Practice of Ministry
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Please read this study guide *carefully*. We have split the previous pre-course work up into two parts. **Everyone will have one assignment due by June 1 submitted via Blackboard and one assignment due the first day of class.**

Please schedule time each week to work on your pre-course work. If you are able to do this you will have the opportunity to come to DC next summer and enjoy some Sabbath time with us. Please let Sara Sheppard or Doug Powe know if we can help you with this in any way.

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*

Written Assignments:

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 on the course Blackboard site (Thursday, June 1).

SECOND WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT

An 8-10-page theological reflection paper, (not including endnotes or footnotes, and bibliography) on a selected Christian doctrine. Examples include (but are not limited to) God, creation, grace, salvation, sanctification, Christology, ecclesiology, eschatology, and missiology. You are to (1) define the doctrine using theological sources, which may include assigned texts and additional texts as you find necessary, (2) share what the doctrine has meant to you in your own development spiritually and as a church leader in the practice of ministry, and (3) discuss the significance of the selected doctrine within the context of the contemporary church. This second assignment is due at our first class meeting (Tuesday, July 11).

Criteria for Evaluating Course Work

Regardless of whether you write a paper, answer an essay question, voice an oral presentation, or create any original project, the academic context requires that certain minimal requirements characterize your work. While there are subjective components in the grading process, most professors are concerned that you become well educated in four basic qualities of excellent academic work:

1. *Demonstration of an empathetic understanding of the content of texts and resources.*

Your topic should not only be well researched in the library, through interviews and observations, and/or from assigned readings and class discussions, but you should be able to provide a fair description and a clear understanding of texts and resources. This is apparent in the ability to describe and discuss precisely and accurately what an author has written or a speaker has said. Evaluation, response, and critique follow accurate representation of another's ideas—earn the privilege of criticizing a viewpoint by showing that you really understand it.

2. ***Clear critical thinking that provides appropriate specific evidence for conclusions.*** Use the most precise historical, empirical, or contemporary data or information to support the claims of your thesis and paragraphs. Conclusions follow from and are supported by evidence. Be sure that your evidence is relevant, accurate, and detailed. Adherence to clear critical thinking, relevant and accurate evidence, and logical organization constitute sound arguments. Even creative writing requires logical relationships among ideas to assist your readers in following the plot or main point.
3. ***Creativity that moves beyond reporting someone else's ideas.*** Your creative addition to academic discourse might include questioning, evaluating, applying, criticizing (positively or negatively), developing, or responding. You might see a connection between two or more ideas. You might see information from a unique perspective. The minimal requirement of academic work is correctly repeating what is read or discussed. Excellent work moves beyond repetition to unique insights, organization, correlations, and theses. Work to find your own scholarly and professional voice.
4. ***Grammar, spelling, and form.*** Excellent written work is conscious of proofreading and good communication. Oral presentations are equally accountable for careful expression. A brilliant thesis can be lost in a paper or project that obscures its ideas with careless communication. Your readers and listeners should not have to guess what you mean—help them by speaking and writing well.

Grading:

The instructor assumes that everyone in the class is capable of the work required to receive a “B” grade for each assignment. The following interpretations of the meaning of each grade have been developed to help class members review their work to identify strengths and problems.

A “B” means that the basic elements of the assignment have been faithfully included, the argument is internally coherent, and clearly articulated.

A “B+” means the assignment is also well crafted.

An “A-” means that the assignment is not only well crafted, but it also probes the issues with considerable insight.

An “A” means the assignment is well crafted, reveals considerable insight, and moves beyond the range of the student’s prior knowledge to begin to construct new perspectives and meanings for the subject. In other words, it shows the student’s imagination at work; it has a creative edge.

A “C+” means that the assignment lacks clarity or focus, tends to reveal more the writer’s opinions than the results of the writer’s analysis, and lacks reflective insight into the issues being discussed.

A “C” means that the assignment does not move beyond the reporting of information from readings and/or class discussions to engaging them with issues being discussed; it may indicate inappropriate or misuse of data and readings.

A “C-“ means that despite some moments of focused discussion and insight, major gaps exist in the development of the argument or discussion.

An “F” means the individual needs to see me immediately.

Grades will be reduced a step (e.g. from B to a B-) for assignments handed in after the start of class, and a full letter grade for any assignments 24 hours past due. Assignments over 48 hours past due will be lowered two letter grades. We need to talk if an assignment is over 72 hours past due. Please note only two unexcused absences are allowed before grade is lowered one step.

Final course grades are mailed to the student, GBHEM in Nashville and the student’s conference representative by September 30. Grades are not posted on-line.

Inclusive Language

In both oral and written contributions to the course, students are expected to be conscious of the power of language in theology. Inclusive language respects both gender and racial diversity, and students should demonstrate awareness that language about persons and God expresses values and impacts theological ideas in the details of race and gender connotations. Both gender and race are socially-constructed categories, and changing language is part of bringing justice to theological discourse.

Academic Policies

Attendance: Students are expected to attend all classes in their entirety. Faculty member have the authority to set attendance policies for particular courses and those policies will be included in the course syllabus. Deviation from the attendance policy may result in reduction of grade or loss of credit for the course.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is regarded as a serious offense and will result in substantial penalties, including the possibility of academic dismissal. The faculty regards the following as form of plagiarism or dishonesty:

- Copying from another students paper
- Giving or receiving unauthorized assistance to or from another student during an examination
- Using unauthorized material during an examination
- Borrowing or presenting as one’s own (i.e. without proper attribution) the composition or ideas of another.

Please refer to your Wesley Student Handbook (on-line) for more information about Wesley’s academic policies or contact the Course of Study office 202-885-8688.