

COS 524 Theological Reflection: Practice of Ministry

Effective beginning Fall 2017 term

Course Goals - 524 Theological Reflection: Practice of Ministry

This course is the capstone to the student's basis course of study. Its focus is the integration of the biblical, theological, and practical aspects of ministry.

Students will be able to:

1. Articulate a Trinitarian theology for the practice of ministry.
2. State clearly the nature and mission of the Church and its relation to pastoral ministry.
3. Demonstrate the ability to reflect theologically.
4. Develop a plan for lifelong theological reading, reflection, and growth.

Text Book List

Unless otherwise noted, please use most recent edition.

Required Texts for COS 524 Theological Reflection: Practice of Ministry

1. Kathleen A. Cahalan, *Introducing the Practice of Ministry*, (c) 2010 Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota. (ISBN 978-0814631690)
2. Charles M. Wood and Ellen Blue, *Attentive to God, Thinking Theologically in Ministry*, (c) 2008 Abingdon Press. (ISBN 978-0687651627)
3. Frederick Buechner, *The Sacred Journey, a Memoir of Early Days*, (c) 1982 Harper and Row. (ISBN 0-06-061183-9)

Supplementary Texts

1. William H. Willimon, *Pastor: The Theology and Practice of Ordained Ministry*, Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, Revised Edition, 2016. (ISBN 978-1-5018-0490-8)

Advance Assignments

1. Frederick Buechner writes “... all theology, like all fiction, is at its heart autobiography, and that what a theologian is doing essentially is examining as honestly as he can the rough-and-tumble of his own experience with all its ups and downs, its mysteries and loose ends, and expressing in logical, abstract terms the truths about human life and about God that he believes he has found implicit there.” (Frederick Buechner, *The Sacred Journey*, p.1.)

Ellen Blue and Charles Wood write “... theology is a way of paying attention. It is a way of paying attention to God, and to everything else in its ‘God-relatedness.’” (Charles M. Wood and Ellen Blue, *Attentive to God: Thinking Theologically in Ministry*, p.3.)

Write an autobiography in which you describe significant events and realities of your life and what you discover in your experience to be true about God and about human life. Conclude your work with a brief credo, a statement of belief that is grounded in attentiveness to your life. Support your reflections with references from the reading you have done for the Course of Study, appropriately attributed. Do not exceed eight typewritten pages.

2. Kathleen Cahalan quotes Catherine Mowry LaCugna: “... the doctrine of the Trinity is ultimately a practical doctrine with radical consequences for Christian life.” (Kathleen A. Cahalan, *Introducing the Practice of Ministry*, p. 156.)

Write a sermon for Trinity Sunday (First Sunday after Pentecost) focusing on the mystery of the Triune God and how an understanding of the Triune God shapes our life together as followers of Jesus. Use one or more lessons from the lectionary readings for Trinity Sunday in any of the three years of the Revised Common Lectionary. Write this sermon for the congregation you are serving. Make it both engaging and theologically sound. Provide citations for all quoted material and all borrowed ideas. Do not exceed five typewritten pages.

3. Charles Wood and Ellen Blue, in *Attentive to God: Thinking Theologically in Ministry*, describe a number of “Incidents and Situations.” Pick two of the situations described which parallel events in your own ministry. In response to each of the two situations described by Wood and Blue, write a three or four-page reflection addressing the questions Wood and Ellen suggest on pages 22 and 24:
 - a. What is going on in this situation?
 - b. How is God involved in what is going on?
 - c. What is a fitting response to what is going on?
 - d. What is going on with you as you consider this case?
 - e. How is God involved in what is going on with you in this process?
 - f. How might you respond to what is going on with you?

Be certain to identify the situations that you are responding to by chapter title and page number. Support your reflections with references from the reading you have done for the Course of Study, appropriately attributed. Invite your mentor to read your work, discuss the work with you, and write an assessment of your work. Attach the mentor’s assessment to the assignment.

Saint Paul Course of Study School Expectations and Preparation

The mission of the Course of Study School is to educate and share in the formation of Local Pastors as effective and faithful spiritual leaders of the ministry of the Church, the body of Jesus Christ in the world.

Our agreement with the Division of Ordained Ministry, General Board of Higher Education and Ministry in Nashville is that we will provide a year-round experiential and classroom learning process. This process assumes cooperation between the instructors, the students and clergy mentors in the annual conferences.

The Division of Ordained Ministry recommends a guideline of 15-20 pages of written work for each course. That translates into 30 to 40 pages of written work for each module. If a student takes four classes (two modules), that individual will write about 80 pages during the year. Those papers are based on the reading of approximately 4-5 textbooks per class.

In order to keep our promise of **year-round learning**, and to keep the assignments from accumulating and overwhelming a student, the book list is available for students so that they can **begin reading** as early as possible. We encourage students to put dates on their calendars and plan for reading days, as well as time for writing. You know the demands of certain religious seasons such as Advent, Lent, and Easter. Work around them.

The writing manual approved by the Saint Paul Course of Study School faculty is: **Turabian's A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations, 7th edition**. It is recommended that each student have a good collegiate-size American English dictionary of the student's choice in paperback or hardcover and copyrighted since 1998.

Related to Structure

- Use Turabian's *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 7th edition. You may find further help at www.eturabian.com.
- Unless otherwise indicated, all papers must be typed, 1" margins on all sides, Arial 11 or Times New Roman 12, double-spaced, with indented paragraphs (no additional line spacing between paragraphs), and page numbers. Cover pages and bibliography are not included in assigned page count.
- Cite any quoted sources with appropriately formatted footnotes (not endnotes or parenthetical notes); list these and other sources within an appropriately formatted bibliography. If you use a scriptural reference, cite the translation you use in a footnote and the actual Bible in the bibliography. Each paper should have a bibliography.
- Do not begin sentences with "and" or "but." Do not use contractions. Do not include parenthetical commentary in your papers.
- Use inclusive language when referring to God and/or humankind.
- Use appropriate formatting for page numbering, book titles, etc.
- Double-check spelling, grammar, punctuation, sentence fragments, tense agreement, etc.

Related to Content

- Read the assigned books thoroughly.
- Resist the temptation to write a book report! Instead, focus your writing on what the author(s) have to say about the assigned topic(s), integrating your own thoughts about the topic(s).

Related to Critical Thinking

- Read the assigned books thoroughly, making notes of what resonates within you and what brings up resistance in you.
- Are there other books or resources that would be appropriate? Bring them into the conversation.
- Practice being in dialogue with all the authors and their material. Who would say what? How would you and the other writers respond? This practice dialogue will not be included in your papers, but it will help you to move into critical reflection.
- If you strongly agree or disagree with an author's point of view, offer your own affirmation or disagreement, supporting your view with additional resources.
- Watch for unsupported "leaps" made by a writer. What, in your opinion, is missing? Use additional resources to fill in the gaps.

Related to Timeliness

- Submit all your assignments on time.

In the event of an emergency situation, a student may request an **extension** from the Director (not assigned faculty) to the due date for advance assignments. This request may be made via email, and if granted, may extend to a *three-week maximum*. A student may only receive *two extensions during their tenure* as a Saint Paul Course of Study student – so use them wisely. If assignments are not completed, the policies of the COS are such that the student may be asked postpone participation in a particular session of COS until that individual can complete all of the work.

Learning can be fun! Consider your reading as a dialogue with authors – some will be more interesting than others. All will have something to teach us. Share the learning process with friends or colleagues or interested members of your congregations.

Book List

Each course has **assigned texts**. Students are required to read them, use them in their assignments and are accountable in the classroom for any discussion or presentation of materials. **Reference books** are also required; assignments assure the use of the reference books; they are not classroom texts. Assigned texts and reference books help the student build their own library. **Supplemental texts** (when applicable) are valuable, but optional texts if a student wants to pursue an area of ministry.

Students may acquire the books in a variety of ways: Order from Cokesbury.com; order from another vendor; purchase a used book; or borrow from a colleague.

Instructions for sending assignments to COS office at Saint Paul School of Theology

Course of Study Students are to upload their papers through Moodle. You will need to set up a Moodle account in order to submit your assignments. If you need assistance in setting up your Moodle account, please contact cos@spst.edu for informational handouts. Additional questions on Moodle can be directed to our IT help desk at helpdesk@spst.edu (hours: M – F 8:00am – 5:00pm).