I. COURSE DESCRIPTION:

With input from readings, theological statements, and plenary lectures, MINgroups address professional identity formation (including spiritual formation and Christian identity formation) through covenantal community.

II. TEXTBOOKS:

**Required Reading:**


**Suggested Readings:**


**III. GOALS:**

This is a core course that provides students with advanced opportunities and models within which to develop skills for their calling into leadership in Christian ministry. It integrates classroom, contextual-site, and narrative learning to develop awareness of spiritual development characterized by mature self-acceptance and self-direction. MIN groups help students develop the perspectives and skills necessary for leadership in the formation of disciples. This is accomplished through covenantal companionship, peaceable encounter with self and others, conflict identification and resolution, and critical theological reflection. The aim of the coursework in its entirety is Christian leadership recognized by:

1. A rooted self-confidence, rooted not in the self
2. Self-awareness through differentiation toward self-acceptance, witnessed in expressive delight
3. Healthy bounded relationships with others, those served and serving
4. A practiced willingness to sustain health conflict and navigate ambiguity with love
5. A particular faith identity (Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindi, Buddhist, etc.) heightened by a deep participatory listening, willingness to be shaped by others
6. An ability to articulate learnings and to discover new questions
7. A supple theological vision founded in hope and lived within Spirit

*Artisanal Theology*, p. 8
IV. SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES:

In order for participants to develop spiritually, characterized by mature self-acceptance and self-direction, and in order to develop the perspectives and skills necessary for leadership in the formation of disciples, students will be expected:

• To discover connections between one’s spiritual autobiography, lived experience, and classical theological writings in order to nuance further one’s operative understanding(s) of pastoral leadership
• To document new questions and areas for life-long learning, rooted in classical theological heritage and experience of peer-group
• To synthesize learning from one’s creation and sharing of a spiritual autobiography, case-studies, and theological questions (amidst other degree coursework as well) into a theological statement for ministry appropriate to the pursuit of identified vocational goals
• To reflect upon and enter into further critical theological reflection in a spirit of grace amidst a diverse peer setting so that God’s grace becomes manifest in commonality and difference.

V. LEARNING/TEACHING STRATEGIES:

1. Participation and critical presence in facilitated and communal formation through plenary lectures, MINgroup sessions, worship, and common meals.
2. Weekly reflection reports that serve as opportunities to reflect confidentially with your facilitator and to receive confidential feedback. If desired, you may share them with your mentor as well.
3. A theological statement for ministry.
4. Presentation of Spiritual Disciplines assignment.
5. Service in contextual site 10-20 hours/week.
6. Regular meetings with mentor (on-site/near-site) at least 4 hours/month.

VI. DESCRIPTION OF WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS:

1. Weekly Reflection Reports

Description: Each student will submit a weekly reflection report to the group facilitator. The report will comprise a reflection on their personal, professional and spiritual journey for the week. While there is no prescribed format, each student is encouraged to create a format that allows for intentional reflection on one’s journey. Each report must be 1-2 pages, single-spaced. The student may also share these reflections with the site mentor if desired.

Due Date(s): Reports are due at each week’s meeting time starting with week two and ending the week of May 4-6. There will be nine reports submitted.

2. Theological Statements

Description: Use Appendix D from Artisanal Theology (Summarized in the following guidelines) to create a working draft of your theological statement for ministry.

GUIDELINES

A theological statement for ministry is an opportunity for integrative thinking and careful articulation of your theological formation up to this moment. It is simply a working document, not (as often
popularly conceived) the culmination of your profession of faith or understanding of God and God’s mission within this world. Such a statement is required:

• to articulate a critically, theologically informed stance on God, World, Church, Mission, and Leadership (ordained and lay)
• to identify the theological tradition in which you have been formed and/or are being formed - denominational (for Board or certification purposes, toward ordained ministry) - descriptive (Reformed, process, liberationist, et al) - declared/defined (conceptual coherence and clarity of important themes)
• to be 12-15 pages in length, 12-pt font, double-spaced, 1” margins

Process Highlights:

A. The theological seed work in Fall semester offers opportunity to reflect somewhat systematically on the function of scripture, reason, tradition, and experience in your beginning critical theological understanding. Revisit your beginning articulation there, attentive to comments and resources suggested.

B. Helpful structure for your reflections can be found in both the Apostles’ Creed and the Nicene Creed. Read each of these through several times, noting structure and phrases that resonate and those that you struggle to understand or profess in contemporary language.


D. Return to your introduction to theology texts and resources, or other theological-historical contributions to your current understanding. Begin to jot down the various questions you’ve wrestled with or heard in your coursework hours of theological education. Make a list of scriptural books and/or letters (not verses! Proof-texting is an uncritical, non-theological activity) that have spoken to you in your journey through formal seminary coursework.

E. Write your first draft, however you write best—outline, jump in and rely on stream-of-consciousness flow, write summary paragraphs of your understanding of God, World, Church, Mission, Leadership, etc. Included in those paragraphs or sections should be at least a paragraph on each of the following, for professional ministry pursuits/callings:

Trinity-God
Creation-Christology-Pneumatology
Baptism and/or the Sacraments
Justification/Sanctification
Reign of God
F. The preliminary finished draft for presentation to your MiNGroup must also weave supportive and challenging commentary from other scriptural and theological voices you have encountered. At least 10-15 citations from the biblical witness (both that support your stance and that contradict/challenge your point of view—showing your awareness of complexity and need for critical interpretation of sources), and from authors from historical and contemporary theological discourse (Paul, Church Fathers and Mothers, mystics or visionaries, Reformers such as Calvin, Luther, or Zwingli, Wesley or Knox, contemporary voices such as Ty Inbody, Daniel Migliore, Serene Jones, William Placher, Wendy Farley, Catherine LaCugna—just to name a few). These must be properly cited (see Nancy Jean Vyhmeister, Quality Research Papers for Students of Religion and Theology Zondervan, 2001; pp. 7-13, 32-39, 62-81) and the document properly formatted (1" margins, 12-point font, double-spaced, page numbers top right; use of titles and headings is helpful, so recommended).

G. Your presentation of this theological statement for ministry will require (1) copies provided for each peer and your facilitator, and (2) your choosing 2-4 sections about which you would like commentary or contribution from your peers and facilitator. **Choose sections which you feel least prepared on**, in order to receive most benefit. Read through these sections aloud and then participate in the supervisory discernment conversation. Edit and revise the statement afterwards, as per contributions gained.

H. A final copy of your theological statement for ministry is due into the Office of Contextual Ministries by the last day of class. Keep one copy for your own portfolio, in preparation for review conversations with your advisor, facilitator, and/or mentor.

**Due Date[s]:** **May (18) 20.** Bring with you enough copies of the sections to share for each group member on the day you present. After reading it together, you will be given the copies back to you from your peers.

3. **Spiritual Disciplines Work**

**Description:** Using Ruth Haley Barton’s Sacred Rhythms, students will write a 3-5-page paper (double spaced, 12 pt. font, 1" margins) that covers the following:

- Re-read your spiritual autobiography from Formation. How has God made God’s self known to you? Are there similarities in the disciplines or experiences? Share some responses to this in your paper.
- Using your Rule of Life grid from Macchia’s book from Formation 2, offer a reflection on how you did and did not live into its practice this year. Include in this reflection wisdom gained along the way.
- Using Barton’s guide (162-166), update your Rule of Life for your life’s next season. Keep the Macchia’s grid format or create a more organic one that fits your life. You might want to reference weekly reflections from previous semesters and wisdom gained through four semesters of MiNGroup.
- Make sure your paper includes a description of the obstacles you anticipate rising to the surface as you continue practicing your Rule of Life.
- Conclude your paper with an original (to you) prayer that you might say as you begin each day in your pattern for life.

Each student will present their Rule of Life to their MiNGroup. Submit this paper to your facilitator.

**Due Date[s]:** **April (27) 29.**
4. Insights and Learnings Report

**Description:** Formation and Integration students are responsible for thinking critically about their insights and learning in their theological studies, life experience and practice of ministry. This report will contain reflections about ministry, gifts, accountability on learning goals and your calling.

**Due Date(s):** May (11) 13.

5. Collaborative Inquiry

**Description:** Each student must complete the Collaborative Inquiry Questions, offering three areas of reflection for you to consider: 1) your sense of self in your peer group, 2) your sense of each peer in your group, and 3) your sense of your group’s facilitator. Each member in the group—including the facilitator—will be reflecting on these three areas. The invitation is to be honest—and gentle. The process is aided by the use of “I” statements rather than “you” statements. It is also aided by the use of observations rather than evaluations. Each participant in the group will share responses in MINgroup.

**Due Date(s):** These will be shared as a group on May (11) 13.

6. Evaluation of Site & Mentor by Student/Evaluation of Student by Mentor

**Description:** All students must assess both the Site and the Contextual Ministries Mentor in conversation with the Mentor. The document becomes part of the student’s personal contextual ministry file. The Mentor must also submit an evaluation of the student to be placed in the file. We encourage both of these documents to be discussed in a face-to-face meeting with the student and the Mentor. Students are responsible for both files being signed and submitted.

**Due Date(s):** The final day of class.

VII. OTHER EXPECTATIONS

1. Participation & Attendance: Each student will be assigned a grade based on his or her participation. Each student must participate in the weekly common meal, chapel and group time. Students who are absent for more than 1/6 of the course will be unable to complete the course with a passing grade. Requests for exceptions must be made directly to the facilitator prior to absences. A student cannot miss more than 6 academic hours (2 weeks) for this 3-credit course.

2. Chapel Leadership: On Mondays, each student is expected to work with at least one other to lead a worship service at least once this semester. Wednesday students are expected to serve in chapel as needed.

VIII. CALENDAR OF TOPICS AND READINGS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key:</th>
<th>BOLD</th>
<th>PLENARY SESSIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>BOLD</strong></td>
<td><strong>Assignments/Reading Due</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Bold</strong></td>
<td><strong>Ministry Integration Group Focus</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Normal</strong></td>
<td><strong>Meeting of Monday Ministry Groups</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>(Date)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Meeting of Wednesday Ministry Groups</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Date</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
February (23) 25  THEOLOGICAL STATEMENT; NVC; RULE OF LIFE
Covenant Review, Scheduling, Catching Up
Artisanal Theology, 68-100; Appendix D, 117-119

March (2) 4  NV Communications, SMART goals update
Nonviolent Communication, 91-160
Weekly Reflection Report Due

March (9) 11  Theological Statements
Weekly Reflection Report Due

March (16) 18  Theological Statements
Weekly Reflection Report Due

March (23) 25  Theological Statements
Weekly Reflection Report Due

HOLY WEEK - March 30-April 3

April (6) 8  LEADERSHIP, THEOLOGY & SELF
Theological Statements
Weekly Reflection Report Due

April (13) 15  Theological Statements
Weekly Reflection Report Due

April (20) 22  Theological Statements
Weekly Reflection Report Due

April (27) 29  Rule of Life Discussion
Spiritual Formation Paper Due
Weekly Reflection Report Due

May (4) 6  VOICE & EARDRUMS: COLLABORATIVE INQUIRY, EVALUATIONS
Final Weekly Reflection Report Due

May (11) 13  Collaborative Inquiry
Collaborative Inquiry Notes Due
Insights & Learnings Report Due

May (18) 20  Celebration and Conclusions
Evaluation of Site and Mentor by Student Due
Evaluation of Student by Mentor Due
Theological Statement Due

IX. SEMINARY STANDARDS
A. Inclusive language: United Theological Seminary has an official policy regarding the use of Inclusive Language. The policy may be found in the Seminary Catalog and further explained in the Student Handbook. If you have specific questions, please see the Academic Coordinator.
B. Academic Integrity: Student integrity regarding all work assigned in this class is a basic expectation of the Seminary community. A detailed policy regarding what constitutes a violation of academic integrity can be found in the Student Handbook.

C. Online Confidentiality: One of the highlights of the online classroom is that students can draw from the experiences shared during class discussions and in written work. However, it is imperative that students do not share information that is confidential, privileged, or proprietary in nature. In addition, students are expected to honor the privacy and confidentiality of their classmates by not disclosing online conversations with those outside of the classroom.

D. Statement on Disability: Any student who may need accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the Registrar’s office.

X. USING ONLINE RESOURCES
Information about how to access United Online and where to find help can be found on the seminary website at http://www.united.edu.

XI. METHOD OF DETERMINING FINAL GRADE:

A. Factors in Evaluation of Student
1. Attendance/participation in ministry group, plenary sessions, common meal & chapel.
2. Writing and presentation of a theological statement for ministry
3. Submission of nine (9) weekly reflection reports
4. Service in an approved contextual ministry site for 10-20 hours/week is a prerequisite for receiving credit in this course
5. Submission of mentor’s evaluation of student and student’s evaluation of mentor
6. Submission of insights and learnings report
7. Writing and presentation of an updated Rule of Life
8. Evaluations of the Contextual Ministry experience by means of Collaborative Inquiry

B. Method of Assigning Grades:
The Ministry Group Facilitator in consultation with the Contextual Ministries Director in accord with the standardized evaluation sheet will assign grades. The various assignments will be weighted in terms of their value in relation to the whole of the work assigned. The weight given to each part of the work is listed below:

- 20% Attendance/participation in plenary sessions, ministry group discussions, worship and common meal
- 20% Presentation of a Theological Statement for Ministry
- 15% Submission of Nine (9) Weekly Reflection Reports
- 15% Presentation of Updated Rule of Life
- 10% Submission of Insights and Learning
- 10% Submission of Student/Mentor Evaluations
- 10% Participation in Collaborative Inquiry

The total scores determine the grades assigned according to the following scale:

- 100 – 95 A
- 94 – 90 A-
- 89 – 88 B+
- 87 – 84 B
- 83 – 80 B-
- 79 – 75 C+
XII. COURSE EVALUATION

It is very important for students to submit a course evaluation toward the end of the semester. Instructors do not see the student evaluations at all until after the instructors have submitted the students' final official grades. Students should feel free to evaluate the course without any negative ramifications.