

COS 524-Theological Reflection on the Practice of Ministry
UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
Fall 2016

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This course begins face-to-face and concludes online

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION:

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

II. TEXTBOOKS:

Required Reading:

Kathleen Cahalan, *Introducing the Practice of Ministry*
Eugene Peterson, *Five Smooth Stones for Pastoral Work*
Will Willimon, *Pastor: Revised Edition: The Theology and Practice of Ordained Ministry*
The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church 2012. "Doctrinal Standards and Our Theological Tasks", pages 45-90.

Highly Recommended:

Stephen Seamands, *Ministry in the Image of God: The Trinitarian Shape of Christian Service*

Supplementary:

Charles Wood and Ellen Blue, *Attentive to God: Thinking Theologically in Ministry*
Lacey Warner and Ken Carder, *The Grace to Lead*
Frederick Buechner, *The Sacred Journey*

III. COURSE OBJECTIVES:

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

IV. SCHEDULE

On Campus Weekend: October 7-8, 2016

Before you arrive:

1. **Read** as much of the Peterson book as you can. **Prepare to share** a summary of your spiritual autobiography and call. How has God been present with you thus far?
2. **Bring** the Willimon book with you to class.

Friday

1:30–2:30 pm	Arrival, check-in; refreshments available
2:30–5:00 pm	Class session
5:00–6:00 pm	Dinner – Thie Fellowship Hall
6:00–8:30 pm	Class session

Saturday	
8:00–8:30 am	Light breakfast/beverages available
8:30–11:00 am	Class session
11:15 am–12:00 pm	Chapel – Zimmerman Chapel
12:00–12:45 pm	Lunch – Thie Fellowship Hall
12:45–2:30 pm	Class session

On Campus Topics: The Scripture Way of Salvation, The Trinity, What is Ministry, Theological Reflection, Why the Church, The Nature of Vocation, A Lifelong Plan for Vitality

Online Work: October 9 – November 19, 2016

A Note on Writing

Follow approximate length given for each item of written work. Written work should be double-spaced, 12-point, Times New Roman font, with 1” margins. No cover page is needed.

Put your name, the course number and date on the first page. Please add page numbers too.

If you quote from a printed text, you must use quotation marks and note the source (including pages) in parentheses at the end of each usage. Quotations should never be more than a sentence or two long. For assigned texts, you may abbreviate the titles by using the first letter of each word in the title. For example, *Five Smooth Stones* could be abbreviated, (*FSS*, pp. 24-25). If you refer to books that are not on the syllabus, please footnote them for proper credit.

DESCRIPTION OF WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS:

1. Credo

Description: A credo is a written statement of belief describing your understanding of essential Christian doctrine and should be a minimum of 2,000 and a maximum of 2,200 words. Do not copy or quote from The Book of Discipline or other sources. This is not an exercise in repeating doctrinal formulations that you have learned. This is an exercise of integrating and expressing in **your own terms** what you believe. Your credo should flow as a coherent narration of your own understanding as a pastoral theologian and servant leader. An outline will be created during our time together.

Your credo should include at least a section on each of the following topics:

- Trinitarian Theology
- Bible
- Human situation in history, including how we face suffering and evil
- Salvation/Liberation in the light of Eschatology
- The Nature of the Church and its Future
- The meaning and purpose of the sacraments in our life together

Due Date: **October 29.**

2. Ministry Reflection Report

Description: Each student must write and share one Ministry Reflection Report. 3-5 pages.

Preparation

1. Choosing the event or situation

- a. Think about the many events and situations that have had a significant impact on your ministry.

- b. From the many, select one that has current concern for you and in which you have a strong investment of emotional, mental, and/or spiritual energy.
- c. Both positive and negative experiences in ministry make appropriate cases.

2. *Preparing to write*

- a. Recall as much as you can of the details involved in the event or situation; “feel” your way into it as fully as possible.
- b. Make some notes or write a reasonably full account of the event or situation, which you can later reduce to a brief narrative, in order to make sure you have it accurately in mind.
- c. Analyze the event or situation, utilizing the outline for writing; make some notes for the five categories.

Writing the Report

1. *Information.*

Describe the event or situation in a way that a reader can get a mental picture of it. What happened? Who was involved? What was your role? How did you and others respond? What was the result?

2. *Evaluation.*

Relate the effects of the event or situation on you and other persons involved. What emotions did you experience? How did the other people react? How has it affected you personally? How has it affected you professionally? What are the key issues for you?

3. *Analysis.*

Sketch your interpretation of the event or situation as an occasion for ministry. What made it “ministry”? What made it positive or negative? What factor or forces were at work to influence it? What personal knowledge or experience does it challenge? What options are possible as a continuing ministering response?

4. *Theological Reflection.*

State the theological meaning found in the event or situation and in your response to it. What personal beliefs and/or convictions are evidenced in or challenged by it? How did or could your religious experience shape your ministering response? What biblical, historical/or cultural insights relate to it? What “truth” informs you? What ultimate concerns do you have concerning it?

5. *Commitment.*

Set forth the implications growing out of the event or situation for your future ministry. How is this like what you might experience in the future? What have you learned from it? How can its benefits be continued or its hazards be avoided? What ministering response do you intend to make?

Due Date: **November 3.**

3. **Call Narrative & Personal Plan (3-4 pages)**

Description: Open the paper with a page clarifying your call to pastoral ministry. Be as specific as you can: to what are you called, how do you uniquely live that out, etc.? The rest of the paper should be your plan for lifelong theological reading, reflection and growth. Include spiritual disciplines that you will practice, how you will foster theological reflection within yourself and within community and how you will be held accountable.

Due Date: **November 19.**

V. CALENDAR:

Week 1 – October 9-15

Reading: *Introducing the Practice...Chapters 1-3*

Reading: *Five Smooth Stones*

Discussion: Why I am, theologically speaking, a UMC pastor?

Week 2 – October 16-22

Reading: *Introducing the Practice...Chapters 4-5*

Reading: *Five Smooth Stones*

Discussion: Discuss 2 parts of credo

Week 3 – October 23-29

Reading: *Introducing the Practice...Chapters 6-7*

Reading: *Five Smooth Stones*

Discussion: Credo

Due: Credo

Week 4 – October 30-November 5

Reading: *Five Smooth Stones*

Discussion: Ministry Reflection Report

Due: Ministry Reflection Report

Week 5 – November 6-12

Reading: *Five Smooth Stones*

Discussion: Cultural Theological Exegesis

Week 6 – November 13-19

Discussion: Personal Learning Plan

Due: Call Narrative & Personal Plan

VI: 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 instructor.
- 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.

VII: USING ONLINE RESOURCES:

Visit <http://www.united.edu> for information about accessing United Online and where to find help.

VIII. EVALUATION:

40%	Credo Paper
15%	Ministry Reflection Report Paper
15%	Call Narrative & Personal Plan Paper
30%	Online and In Class Engagement

Online Forum Grading

For the community of learning to be most effective, we all need to be engaged. You have seven days for each module. You must find time during those seven days.

- Your initial post each week is due by Thursday, 11:59 pm.
- Your responses are due by Saturday 11:59 pm.
- Church duties are not an excuse for absence. Your appointment to a local church takes into account the need for school preparation. As part of your appointment, you are expected to be present.

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

100 – 95	A	83 – 80	B-
94 – 90	A-	79 – 75	C+
89 – 88	B+	74 – 70	C
87 – 84	B	69 – 00	F

W-Withdrawal (A student officially withdraws by the proper date)

IX. COURSE EVALUATIONS:

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

X. ACADEMIC HONOR POLICY

The Course of Study School of Ohio requires that all material submitted by a student in fulfilling academic requirements must be the original work of the student. Violations of academic honor include any action by a student indicating lack of integrity in academic ethics. Violations include, but are not limited to, cheating and plagiarism. Cheating includes seeking, acquiring, receiving or passing on information about the content of an examination prior to its authorized release or during its administration. Cheating also includes seeking, using, giving or obtaining unauthorized assistance in any academic assignment or examination. Plagiarism is the act of presenting the published or unpublished words or ideas of another [including online resources] as if it were one's own work. A writer's work should be regarded as his or her own property. Any person who knowingly (whether intentionally or unintentionally) uses a writer's distinctive work without proper acknowledgement is guilty of plagiarism. A student found guilty of a violation of the academic honor policy, after a review of the case, may be subject to one or more of the following actions:

- (1) warning
- (2) probation
- (3) suspension for the remainder of the course
- (4) dismissal from the Course of Study School of Ohio
- (5) failing grade for the course.

Regardless of the outcome, a letter will be sent to the student's District Superintendent and Board of Ordained Ministry.