Northern Seminary
SM 301  FORMATION FOR CHRISTIAN MINISTRY
SPRING 2015
Tuesdays 7:00 p.m. – 9:40 p.m.
Rev. Dr. Tasha Brown, Instructor
(630) 620-2161
Email: tbrown@faculty.seminary.edu
Office hours: 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. or by appointment

NOTE: A $370 fee will be charged at registration to pay for the assessment to be done by the Midwest Ministry Development Service.

Course Description

The Formation for Christian Ministry course is designed to assist students as they seek to understand themselves and prepare to serve Christ’s church in ministry. Students will participate in a faculty guided, small-group experience, supplemented with designated readings, guided discussion, and peer reflection/support. This course offers an integrative approach to Christian Ministry, emphasizing the theological, spiritual, ethical, psychological, sociological, and functional dimensions of Christian ministry through the contemporary church.

In Formation for Christian Ministry, students reflect upon the following questions:

- Who has God created me to be?
- What are my gifts and what spiritual preparation is required for Christian leadership?
- How do I interpret (my) call?
- How do I perceive/understand ministry/service?
- How does my understanding of God, self, and others inform my call to ministry?
- How do my personality, psychological makeup and life experience inform my call to ministry?
- Where am I in terms of personal formation: Christian Character, spiritual and emotional maturity, integration of faith and practice and ministerial skill development?

Course Objectives

This course will enable students to do the following:

- Identify the nature of their calling to ministry and their concept of self as minister.
- Develop an understanding of the nature of the church and its mission as a context for ministry.
- Experience enhancement of their spiritual life in Christ.
- Understand the social and ethical demands of the Christian minister.
- Understand how personal wholeness, personality type, psychological make-up, and life experience impact ministerial identity and formation.
• Contribute to their peers’ formation as ministers by giving and receiving individual and group support.
• Develop a formation plan to enhance spiritual growth, personal wholeness and ministerial formation.
• Build a network of accountability partners for ministry.

**Required Books**


**Other Resources**


McCarty, Doran C. and George W. Knight. *The Practice of Ministry: A Sourcebook.* Nashville: Seminary
Course Requirements

It is anticipated that students entering into professional ministry will submit themselves to spiritual, ministerial, relational, and pastoral identity development through evaluation and critical reflection. In order to offer a fair means of evaluation, grading will be assigned as follows:

Grades – Students will receive a grade upon successful completion of all course requirements on time, attendance at all class sessions, full participation in class discussion, and attentive support of one’s peers in class. Students should demonstrate ability to critically reflect upon their attitudes, values, and assumptions about God, self, and ministry. Students should also demonstrate ability to reflect upon their strengths and weaknesses. Written assignments account for 75 percent of the grade.

Seminary Formation Plan (SFP) (25%) – The SFP plan has 11 subject areas to be addressed. Each area is worth 2.27 points. There are five components that need to be addressed within each area. Students will receive .27 points for developing a thorough overview and .50 points for each of the remaining four components addressed in each of the 11 subject areas for a total of 25 points for the assignment. Points will be deducted for incomplete or missing responses. See guidelines at the end of the syllabus for specific requirements.

Class Attendance and Participation (30%) – Students will receive credit for attending and participating in class.

Reflection Papers (30%) – A total of two reflection papers are to be submitted. Instructions will be given in class.

Devotion/Journal (15%) - Students are expected to spend at least one hour a day, four days a week in prayerful reflection using Becoming Who God Wants You to Be: 60 Meditations for Personal Spiritual Direction. Students are to reflect and journal. A copy of the journal with dated entries is to be turned in on the last day of class. The journal need not be typed if it is legible and a minimum of forty (40) entries is required.
Ministry Assessments (CR) – Students are required to complete a variety of assessments including a mandatory ministry assessment process through Midwest Ministry. Students will receive credit for completing their Midwest assessment along with completing and submitting their Personal Evaluations for Ministry and Character Self-Assessments. Points will be deducted from a student’s final grade if either of the three assessments/evaluations are not completed.

Homework Assignments (CR) – Students will receive credit for completing the following homework assignments: Rule of Life and Time Management form.

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Tardiness – Two late arrivals to class will result in one unexcused absence. Two more late arrivals equal two absences and student will not pass the course. Finding balance in one’s life, making time for priorities, and establishing appropriate boundaries is an outcome goal for students in this course and an essential skill in ministry.

Absence – One absence is allowed for unavoidable reasons such as severe illness. Additional absences will result in a lowered grade for the course. Being busy or having another appointment is no reason for an absence. If there is going to be an unavoidable absence, one must contact the professor prior to the beginning of the quarter in order to discuss the potential absence. A make-up assignment will be granted for one absence. All other absences will result in the final grade being lowered by each absence.

Make-up Assignment – No make-up assignments will be given.

Submitting Assignments – All assignments will be uploaded in MS Word to Moodle by their assigned due dates with a hard copy submitted in class. No other format is permitted.
Course Schedule

APRIL 7
Session One: Introduction/Building Group Support
- Devotion
- Review syllabus
- Sign Group Covenant (Appendix A)
- Discuss devotion/journal requirement
- Discussion on requirements for Seminary Formation Plan and Reflection Paper
- Signup sheets for class devotion
- Points on group discussion process
- Group Exercise – “Why am I in seminary…what led me here?
- Personal Evaluations for Ministry should be emailed electronically (after class) to a ministerial supervisor plus three other church leaders who have known you in ministry. These are to be brought to class during session eight and also uploaded to Moodle.

APRIL 14
Session Two: Understanding How God Has Been Revealed to Us
- Devotion
- Come to class having completed one week of the following:
  - One hour devotion with God four days a week
  - Chapter One of the Weems book
  - Journal your reflections
- Sharing our faith stories – to discern and reflect upon the movement of the Spirit in our lives through an in-class exercise: Our Relationship with God/Poster Board Activity

APRIL 21
Session Three: Midwest Visit
- Devotion
- Midwest Presentation

APRIL 28
Session Four: Understanding Ourselves and the Nature of Call
- Read Chapter 2 of Weems and reflect on her journey as you understand your own journey and your call to ministry
- Be prepared to discuss Henri Nouwen’s Wounded Healer
- Exercise: This is Who I Am
- Small group
  - How are clergy and laity distinguished in your ministry setting?
  - What is the meaning of call/vocation?
How do we discern God’s call?
What are some signs of God’s call?

MAY 5
Session Five: Spiritual Disciplines – Practices That Enhance the Life of Faith

- Read Chapter 8 of Sisk book
- Write journal reflections on one of the disciplines outlined in the book and its implication for enhancing your life of faith
- Read and reflect upon the following texts: Romans 12:9-21; 1 Timothy 3:18. What do these texts suggest about the life of faith? Do these texts present a realistic picture of Christian ministry and the life of faith?
- Lecture and discussion on practices that enhance the life of faith
- Draft copy/outline of Seminary Formation Plan due

MAY 12
Session Six: Personality and Ministry

- Bring Midwest Enneagram Results and MMBI Profile (Come to class knowing your MMBB 4-letter preference and Enneagram type name)
- Research and read material relating to your type. You can use Please Understand Me or Personality Type and Religious Leadership as resources.
- Prepare and bring to class a 1 – 3 page “self-profile,” which shows what you have learned about yourself from the Myers Briggs and required readings. Tell how your type and the reading materials relate to your ministry. List any “ah-ha” revelations. List the things that were on target and those things that missed the mark. Include discussion about strengths and weaknesses.
- Upload to Moodle and bring to class copies of the four “Personal Evaluations for Ministry Candidate” which were filled out by church members. You will need to keep the original for a later assignment. Prepare a summary of survey responses. Were there any surprises? Were the members on target?
- Lecture and discussion on personality type; discussion on “Personal Evaluations for Ministry.”

MAY 19
Session Seven: Ephesians 4 – Exploring Spiritual Maturity

A copy of “Character Self-Assessment” is due at the beginning of class. Keep original as a reference for final class assignment.

- Discussion on “Character Self-Assessment”
- Lecture and Discussion on Spiritual Maturity and Theological Worlds
- Small Groups
  - What is Spiritual Maturity? How do these statements relate to spiritual maturity:
  - Run on the road God called you to travel
  - The old way has to go


- Forgiving yourself and others
- Facing your fears of inadequacy
- Thinking no more and no less of yourself than you ought
- What are the components of a mature Christian life?

- For next week: Bring Denomination Code of Ethics

**MAY 26**

**Session Eight: Ministerial Ethics: Starting Right and Finishing Right**

- Read Chapters 7 and 8 of Sisk book
- If your congregation or denomination has a written code of ethics/conduct for clergy, please bring a copy to class
- What is the relationship between clergy character and clergy behavior?
- The Covenant and Code of Ethics
- Clergy Misconduct
- Pass out Rule of Life Hand-out

**Small Group Questions:**

- What have you heard or experienced of clergy misconduct?
- What is the relationship between clergy character and misconduct?
- What is underlying clergy conduct?
- What prevents it?
- Where might you be tempted? What fits your own character weakness?
- My resolutions for life: due next week (My own “Rule of Life”)

- Time Management assignment

**JUNE 2**

**Session Nine: Clergy Self-Care and Time Management**

- “Rule of Life” due
- Read Chapters 4 and 5 of Sisk book and entire Jones book on self-care
- In preparation for class, use “Time Management” form. Prepare a one-page type written summary of what you learned from the form for in-class discussion

- **Exercise:** My House

**JUNE 9**

**Session Ten: Closure**

- Seminary Formation Plan – upload to Moodle prior to class. Follow guidelines provided on Moodle.
- Copy of Journal due at the beginning of class
- Group Exercise: “On Being a Servant of God”
- In class: “What This Group Has Meant to Me” exercise
- Professor and Course evaluations on Moodle
POLICIES FOR ALL MASTERS CLASSES

NOTE: All communications from the seminary will go to your seminary email account. Contact ithelpdesk@seminary.edu if you need help forwarding your seminary email address to your personal email address.

As a seminary community we hold integrity/hospitality as core values. Individuals are able to do their best work and thinking when their peers are fully present and engaged. We expect each person to both participate in class and carefully listen to others with the belief that everyone’s contribution is equally important. Therefore, the following policies have been established in order to provide clarity in regard to attendance expectations and relationships in the classroom.

Late Work Policy
If a student cannot complete the work for a course by the due date listed on the syllabus, they must submit a “Request for a Grade of Incomplete” form to the Registrar by 4:30 of the last day of the term. The form must be signed by the instructor and Dean of Students. The professor may set stipulations and grade reductions. In the absence of a formal request form, the student will receive a grade based upon work completed by the last day of the term.

Turabian Format
All papers, including footnotes and bibliography, must be submitted in the correct format according to Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 7th ed., 2007.

Plagiarism
Plagiarism is the act of passing off as one’s own the words or ideas of someone else without providing proper acknowledgement or documentation. See the “Academic Honesty Policy” in the Seminary Catalog for more information on plagiarism and how to avoid it.

Electronic Format
Unless otherwise specified by the professor, all work submitted electronically must be in a Word document format (.doc, .docx).

Technology Use in the Classroom
Unless it is directly tied to note-taking or research for the class, students are expected to refrain from using cell phones, laptops, or other electronic devices during class.

Course Evaluation in Moodle
Students must complete an online course evaluation using the seminary Moodle system at http://moodle.seminary.edu. The evaluation will be at the end of the course. If you need assistance connecting to Moodle or accessing the evaluation, please send an email to ithelpdesk@seminary.edu.