Northern Seminary  
SM 301 FORMATION FOR CHRISTIAN MINISTRY  
FALL 2015  
Thursday 4:00 p.m. – 6:40 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**


**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) (30%)** – Credit will be given for submission of the draft copy due **October 29th** and submission of the final copy due **December 10th**. See guidelines at the end of the syllabus for specific requirements. Points will be deducted for late or incomplete plans.

**Class Attendance and Participation (20%)** – Students will receive credit for attending and participating in class. Students are expected to contribute to class discussions, participate in small group discussions and complete in-class activities/exercises. Points will be deducted for absences and lack of participation.
Homework assignments (50%) – Students will receive credit for completing the following homework assignments:

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 or any other resource material that interests the student. 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 (15%) – 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 and/or submitted.

Reflection Paper (10%) – Prepare a 2 – 3 page reflection paper which shows what you have learned about yourself from the Myers Briggs assessment, Enneagram 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 your strengths and weaknesses.

Rule of Life (5%) – Students are required to develop a set of ethical statements by which they live by. Please refer to the Resolutions of Jonathan Edwards for an example, http://www.desiringgod.org/articles/the-resolutions-of-jonathan-edwards.

Time Management form (5%) – Students will have to record their activity for one week and prepare a one-page summary of their reflection.
Tardiness – Two late arrivals to class will result in one unexcused absence. Two more late arrivals equal two absences and the 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. Two absences will prevent the student from passing the course.

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

OCTOBER 1
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 six and also uploaded to Moodle.

OCTOBER 8
Session Two: Understanding How God Has Been Revealed to Us
- Devotion – Student led
- Come to class having completed one week of the following:
  - One hour devotion with God four days a week
  - Journal your reflections
• **Reading:** Weems, Preface
• 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**

**OCTOBER 15**

**Session Three: Understanding Ourselves and the Nature of Call**
• Devotion - Student led
• **Readings:** Weems chapter 2, Gushee chapter 4 and Wiersbe chapters 1 - 8
• **Exercise:** This is Who I Am
• **Small group**
  o How are clergy and laity distinguished in your ministry setting?
  o What is the meaning of call/vocation?
  o How do we discern God’s call?
  o What are some signs of God’s call?

**OCTOBER 22**

**Session Four: Midwest Visit**
• Devotion - Student led
• Midwest Presentation

**OCTOBER 29**

**Session Five: Spiritual Disciplines – Practices That Enhance the Life of Faith**
• Devotion - Student led
• **Readings:** Sisk chapter 8, Weems chapter 1, Wiersbe chapter 9 and Gushee chapter 5
• 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 3:1-8. 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**

**NOVEMBER 5**

**Session Six: Personality and Ministry**
• Devotion - Student led
• Bring Midwest Enneagram Results and MBTI Profile (Come to class knowing your MBTI 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.
• **Readings: Sisk chapters 3 and 6, Gushee chapter 7.**
• Lecture and discussion on personality type; discussion on “Personal Evaluations for Ministry.”
• **Reflection paper due.**
• **Personal Evaluation for Ministry due.** Upload to Moodle and bring to class copies of the four “Personal Evaluations for Ministry Candidate” which were filled out by church members. Prepare a summary of survey responses. Were there any surprises? Were the members on target? Share reflections in small group activity

**NOVEMBER 12**
**Session Seven: Ephesians 4 – Exploring Spiritual Maturity**
• Devotion - Student led
• Discussion on “Character Self-Assessment”
• **Readings: Gushee chapter 5 and Wiersbe chapter 10**
• Lecture and Discussion on Spiritual Maturity and Theological Worlds
• **Small Groups**
  o What is Spiritual Maturity? How do these statements relate to spiritual maturity:
  o Run on the road God called you to travel
  o The old way has to go
  o Forgiving yourself and others
  o Facing your fears of inadequacy
  o Thinking no more and no less of yourself than you ought
  o What are the components of a mature Christian life?
• For next week: Bring Denomination Code of Ethics
• **Character Self-Assessment due** at the beginning of class. Keep original as a reference for final class assignment.

**NOVEMBER 19**
**Session Eight: Ministerial Ethics: Starting Right and Finishing Right**
• Devotion - Student led
• **Readings: Sisk chapters 7 and 8, Gushee chapter 10 and remainder of Wiersbe**
• 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:
  o What have you heard or experienced of clergy misconduct?
  o What is the relationship between clergy character and misconduct?
  o What is underlying clergy conduct?
  o What prevents it?
  o Where might you be tempted? What fits your own character weakness?
  o My resolutions for life: due next week (My own “Rule of Life”)

• Time Management assignment (In preparation for next week’s class, complete the Time Management form and prepare a one-page type written summary of what you learned from the form for in-class discussion.)

DECEMBER 3
Session Nine: Clergy Self-Care and Time Management
• Devotion - Student led
• Readings: Chapters 4 and 5 of Sisk
• Exercise: My House
• “Rule of Life” due
• Time management assignment due

DECEMBER 10
Session Ten: Closure
• Devotion - Student led
• Group Exercise: “On Being a Servant of God”
• In class: “What This Group Has Meant to Me” exercise
• Professor and Course evaluations on Moodle
• Seminary Formation Plan due– upload to Moodle prior to class. Follow guidelines provided on Moodle.
• Copy of Journal due
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 in order to receive a final grade for the course. The evaluation will be open for one week starting the last day of the term. If you need assistance connecting to Moodle or accessing the evaluation, please send an email to ithelpdesk@seminary.edu.