Northern Seminary
SM 301-01 FORMATION FOR CHRISTIAN MINISTRY
FALL 2013
Tuesdays 7:00 p.m. – 9:40 p.m.
Tasha Brown, Instructor
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Email: tbrown@faculty.seminary.edu
Office hours: 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, 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?
- How do I interpret (my) call?
  How does my church community perceive me as a minister?
- 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 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) (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 Participation (25%)** – Students will receive 1.5 points for each class attended and 1 point for participating in class discussion each session.

**Devotion/Journal (20%)** - Students are expected to spend one hour a day, four days a week in prayerful reflection, using the devotional book, *On Being a Servant of God,* by Warren W. Wiersbe. 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.
Ministry Assessment (20%) – Students are required to complete a variety of assessments including a mandatory ministry assessment process through Midwest Ministry. Students will receive specific details and instructions from the Supervised Ministry office.

Rule of Life (10%) – This assignment emerges from Session Nine, “Ministerial Ethics.”

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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 – Make-up work for an absence will entail reading Howard Thurman’s, Spiritual Discipline and turning in a three-page, double-spaced reflection paper on Thurman’s topic of commitment. This paper is due on or before the last day of class.
Submitting Assignments – All assignments will be uploaded in MS Word to Moodle by their assigned due dates. No other format is permitted. Some assignments may be also need to be turned in to the professor in hard copy in addition.

Course Schedule

SEPTMBER 24
Session One: Introduction/Building Group Support
- Review syllabus
- Sign Group Covenant (Appendix A)
- Discuss devotion/journal requirement
- Signup sheets for class devotion
- Points on group discussion process
- Group Exercise – “What I’ve given to education in the past” and “My greatest fear regarding seminary is…”
- 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.

OCTOBER 1
Session Two: Understanding How God Has Been Revealed to Us
- Continuation of introductions and group exercise
- Discussion on requirements for the Seminary Formation Plan
- Come to class, having completed one week of the following:
  - One hour devotion with God four days a week
  - Chapter One of the Wiersbe book
  - Journal your reflections
- Read Chapter One of Sisk book
- In preparation for class, read and reflect upon Saul’s Damascus Road encounter (Acts: 1 – 20)
- Sharing our faith stories – to discern and reflect upon the movement of the Spirit in our lives
- “Our Relationship with God” exercise

OCTOBER 8
Session Three: Understanding the Nature of Call
- Complete any unfinished stories from last session
- Read Chapter 2 and 3 of Sisk book
- “This is Who I Am” exercise
- 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?

OCTOBER 15
Session Four: Midwest Visit

OCTOBER 22
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

OCTOBER 29
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)
• Read all of the sections from Please Understand Me as they relate to your personality type preferences in Chapters 1, 2, and 5
• Read the sections relating to your type in Chapters 4, 5, 6, and 9 in the book, Personality Type and Religious Leadership
• 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.”
NOVEMBER 5
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
- 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

NOVEMBER 12
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

NOVEMBER 19
Session Nine: Clergy Self-Care and Time Management
- “Rule of Life” due
- Read Chapters 4 and 5 of Sisk book and entire Melander 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
• “My House” exercise

NOVEMBER 26
No Class

DECEMBER 3
Session Ten: Closure

• Seminary Formation Plan (typed) – due at the beginning of class. Follow guidelines provided by the Supervised Ministry Office
• Copy of Journal due at the beginning of class
  For each section of the plan, include what you have learned from your daily devotions, the Myers Briggs, the Character Self-Assessment, Personal Evaluations, Ministry Assessment process, class discussions, and critical self-reflection. For each section, include then names of persons to whom you will be accountable
  REMEMBER
  For each person whom you list as an accountability person; there needs to be a letter or “contract” of sorts which clarifies:
  1. A specific area of your life in which you are seeking accountability and growth;
  2. A clear statement regarding what goal you want to achieve in this area of your life; where you are “heading” and how you will know you have gotten there;
  3. Your expectations for the accountability relationship and why you have selected this person;
  4. A brief statement clarifying what they covenant to “be” in your life in terms of specific areas of accountability they are going to work on with you and how they view the relationship (for example: counselor, mentor, or Barnabas “side-by-side” encourager – be specific);
  5. How and how often you will intentionally connect with this accountability person and how you will track/record meetings and progress;
  6. And their clear written consent and intent to serve faithfully in this role
• In class: “What This Group Has Meant to Me” exercise
• Professor and Course evaluations (online)
GUIDELINES FOR SEMINARY FORMATION PLAN

The Seminary Formation Plan is foundational to your education, spiritual growth, and intentional development during your time at Northern. The plan you develop will be updated and reviewed yearly. This plan is to be used by you. Therefore, it will uniquely reflect where you are in your self-awareness and in your place of growth. It is also designed to push you to better understand your call to ministry. You’ll also use this plan to develop part of your Internship experience.

Please keep a copy of your final Seminary Formation Plan in your personal records and refer to it often during your time at Northern to see how you’re growing in each area. You will be asked to update this plan as part of each Supervised Ministry course you take at Northern.

Your task in the Seminary Formation Plan is to reflect upon what you have learned about yourself and ministry this quarter. This plan will probably be 8-10 pages in length. Please be thoughtful and concise in your responses.

In your plan, you are asked to draw upon what you have learned from classroom discussions, exercises, readings and your devotional life. In light of your understanding, develop a Seminary Formation Plan (using the format provided below) which you will implement during your next three years of seminary. Include reflection regarding where you are in each area. Please write specific goals under each area, and include how you intend to meet these goals.

Instructions for Seminary Formation Plan -

For each of the areas to be covered in your Seminary Formation Plan, please spend time in prayerful reflection and answer the specific questions found under the subject areas bulleted below. In addition to answering the specific questions, under each subject area discuss:

Your strengths
Where there is needed growth/experience
List specific action steps to be taken in order to achieve growth
How you will be – and to whom you will be accountable – for your growth/development

SUBJECT AREAS

Calling – Articulate your understanding of your calling and how that understanding has moved/shifted/been strengthened/been called to question during this past quarter. What do you believe you are called to do and be at this point? During this year/quarter, how have you become aware of yourself as a minister and the ways your ministry affects persons?

In addition to answering the specific questions, discuss:
Your strengths
Where there is needed growth/experience
List specific action steps to be taken in order to achieve growth
How you will be – and to whom you will be accountable – for your growth/development

Spiritual Disciplines and Practices – Describe your relationship with God at this time. Include how you have experienced a longing for God and how you have been “hearing” from God. Describe where you hear God calling you to greater healing, health, growth? What spiritual disciplines are you practicing in this season of your life? How fruitful is your devotional life and pursuit of the mind of Christ and godliness? What gets in the way? Where have you experienced victory? Where would you like to go from here? If you would like coaching regarding spiritual


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In addition to answering the specific questions, discuss:
Your strengths
Where there is needed growth/experience
List specific action steps to be taken in order to achieve growth
How you will be – and to whom you will be accountable – for your growth/development

**Sabbath** – How do you practice a weekly Sabbath and other rest? What hunches do you have regarding how God may be calling you to shift these patterns?

In addition to answering the specific questions, discuss:
Your strengths
Where there is needed growth/experience
List specific action steps to be taken in order to achieve growth
How you will be – and to whom you will be accountable – for your growth/development

**Ministerial Skills** – Take time to list your ministry skills in 3 categories. (Example areas of ministry include: leadership, preaching, teaching, youth, older adults, community outreach, evangelism, counseling, administration, finance, conflict, etc.) The 3 categories are:
What have you learned to **do quite well or find more natural** to do because of your natural abilities or gifting?
What do you think you will **do well with opportunities** to grow?
Are there areas of ministry that are a source of anxiety for you? Finish this sentence: “I do not want to be in a ministerial position where I’ll be in charge of or expected to……..”

In addition to answering the specific questions, discuss:
List specific action steps to be taken in order to achieve growth (Where/how can you practice these skills? What books should you read or conferences should you plan on attending?)
How you will be – and to whom you will be accountable – for your growth/development

**Ministerial Ethics** – Does your life/lifestyle reflect the character of Christ? Describe how your life reflects the character of Christ? (i.e. Where do you see the fruits of the Spirit? Are you abstaining from sin? etc.) How are you doing in terms of:
Confidentiality
Professionalism
Decision making
Doing the right things

In addition to answering the specific questions, discuss:
Your strengths
Where there is needed growth/experience
List specific action steps to be taken in order to achieve growth
How you will be – and to whom you will be accountable – for your growth/development
Understanding of My Church and Denomination – What is your understanding of the theological tradition of your church or denomination? Briefly explain the process for ordination in your church or denomination. Who should you contact to prepare for ministerial or vocational placement?

In addition to answering the specific questions, discuss:
Your strengths
Where there is needed growth/experience
List specific action steps to be taken in order to achieve growth
How you will be – and to whom you will be accountable – for your growth/development

Physical and Mental Health – Are you physically and mentally healthy? What are you doing in your life to care for your body and your mind? In what ways do you need to improve your health? What gets in the way of your achieving greater health? Reflect on your exercise, sleep, thought life and eating habits. Complete the following sentence: “If I were to be perfectly honest about my physical and mental health, I would tell you…”.

In addition to answering the specific questions, discuss:
Your strengths
Where there is needed growth/experience
List specific action steps to be taken in order to achieve growth
How you will be – and to whom you will be accountable – for your growth/development

Relational and Social Health – Do you have a healthy balance between ministry, social life, family, recreation, etc? Develop a plan for improving your relational and social health. What kind of appropriate boundaries do you have or do you need to create?

Do you have people in your life who support you in ministry and/or in seminary? Identify several people who will or have supported you emotionally and spiritually during your time in seminary. Develop a ministerial support team of fellow students and current people in ministry.

In addition to answering the specific questions, discuss:
Your strengths
Where there is needed growth/experience
List specific action steps to be taken in order to achieve growth
How you will be – and to whom you will be accountable – for your growth/development

Financial Health – How are your finances? Are you living within your means or are you struggling? Do you have a budget written that works for you and your family? Is there room for improvement? What are the stresses in your finances? Is there anything in your spending patterns about which you are ashamed?

In addition to answering the specific questions, discuss:
Your strengths
Where there is needed growth/experience
List specific action steps to be taken in order to achieve growth
How you will be – and to whom you will be accountable – for your growth/development

**Conflict Management** – Most of us know if we are people pleasers who avoid conflict at all costs or ignore our own boundaries and bend over backward in order to appease those who are angry, frustrated, hurt, etc. On a scale of 1-10, how comfortable are you in facing and managing individual and group conflict? What skills do you possess that you might you draw upon during conflict? What is your gut response and outward response when you see conflict between others? When the conflict involves you?

In addition to answering the specific questions, discuss:
Your strengths
Where there is needed growth/experience
List specific action steps to be taken in order to achieve growth
How you will be – and to whom you will be accountable – for your growth/development

**Time Management** – Each of us fall somewhere between absolutely **controlling time** (because it makes us feel and think we are competent) and, on the other end of the polarity, **ignoring time** (because of some avoidance issue or lack of motivation). Most of us struggle with not thinking we are enough, or falsely assuming we are absolutely fine with what we think and do. Explain your approach to time management. Is time an enemy, something you ignore or is it neutral? What is functional and what is dysfunctional in how you live within the time constraints and opportunities in life? How can you improve your time management skills?

In addition to answering the specific questions, discuss:
Your strengths
Where there is needed growth/experience
List specific action steps to be taken in order to achieve growth
How you will be – and to whom you will be accountable – for your growth/development
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.