

Int 500: Introduction to Theological Education
Fall Semester 2017

Professors: Cheryl B. Anderson, Stephen Ray, and Rene Schreiner

Tuesdays 2:30-4:30 pm

Course Description:

This is the first course taken in the curriculum and it assists students to develop the writing and analytic skills for theological education, identify their role as interpreters of traditions and contexts, and gain critical self-awareness, with particular attention given to how theological education addresses systemic evil, racism, and injustice.

Because of this course's focus on the necessary critical thinking and writing skills for theological education (rather than on a specific form of or context for ministry) it is foundational for all ministry contexts.

Key Questions:

- What does it mean to be a critical thinker?
- Who are we as readers and interpreters of the church's theological traditions?
- What is the difference and relationship between academic and devotional, public and personal, pre-critical and critical study of Scripture and theology?
- How do we represent and communicate the church's and our own theological perspectives and insights?

Terminal Learning goals:

What will students learn or achieve in general through the course?

- transition from pre-critical to critical understandings of Scripture, tradition, and history
- recognize that as interpreters they come from interpretive traditions and need to locate themselves within a spectrum of interpretation
- become critical thinkers with a sense of their own hermeneutical and theological perspectives
- understand what a theological curriculum can help them do as Christian leaders
- begin to develop the critical tools needed to analyze evil, injustice and racism
- sharpen academic writing skills

Skill development:

Through this course students will develop the following skills:

- to use critical thinking, including: the ability to distinguish sound from unsound arguments; to recognize and identify presuppositions and assumptions; and to detect, distinguish, and place hermeneutical and theological perspectives
- to concisely explain the difference between the Bible as book of study and as scripture
- to practice reading and understanding primary vs. secondary literature in biblical studies, church history, theology
- to communicate with others in writing and orally
- to explain, describe, define, argue, etc.
- to accurately use the Turabian citation mechanism
- begin to transfer/apply ideas and perspectives from one context to another context

Dispositions developed in the course:

What will be key values, attitudes, habits and/or commitments promoted in the course for faithful and righteous Christian learning, living, leadership and/or service?

- becoming a community of learners committed to the work of theological education
- developing an honest openness to others that is both irenic and critical
- being open to transformation through theological education
- having a critical self-awareness that both affirms and corrects/develops a theological perspective
- representing themselves and their traditions
- developing habits supporting integration, connection, and coherence across disciplines and interpretive frameworks

Required Texts: (accessed on May 19, 2017)

Eric D. Barreto and Michael J. Chen, *Exploring the Bible* (Fortress Press, 2016)
ISBN-13: 978-15064011041, \$18.98 at amazon.com.

Leah Gunning Francis, *Faith in Ferguson: Sparking Leadership and Awakening Leadership*
(Chalice Press, 2015)
ISBN-13: 978-0827211056, \$14.40 at amazon.com.

David M. Mellott, *Finding your way in Seminary: What to Expect, How to Thrive*
(Westminster John Knox Press, 2016)
ISBN-13: 978-0664259501, \$22.00 at wjkbooks.com.

Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited* (Beacon Press, reprint, 1996)
ISBN-13: 978-0807010297, \$8.43 at amazon.com.

Additional readings for the course will be posted on Moodle.