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INT 800: Seminar in Practical Theology

Spring 2020 / Thursdays 2:30-5:30pm

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Description: This seminar focuses on practical theology as a form of ecclesial and public discourse as well as a theological method. Purposes include the following:

- a) To explore the literature of and perspectives on practical theology in conversation with Christian education, liturgy, pastoral theology, church leadership, and community organization;
- b) To articulate integrated methods for engaging the intersection of theology, research, and ministry; and
- c) To engage an interdisciplinary conversation between theology, the social sciences, and philosophy.

The course is designed as a seminar for PhD and advanced MA/MDiv students. Students will lead seminar discussions of key texts and present their work for feedback from peers and faculty.

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- a) describe and analyze contemporary debates about practical theology as an aspect of all theology and ministry study;
- b) compare and contrast different methods of practical theological research appropriate to their primary disciplines;
- c) critically reflect on their own identity as practical theologians in/for the church and academy.

Requirements:

1. Attendance and participation in all aspects of the class.
2. Completion of all assigned reading.
3. Each PhD student will provide at least one written (1500 words) discussion starter for part of a class session exploring approaches in practical theology. The discussion starter is to be a brief (20 minute) appreciative description of the approaches to practical theology in the assigned readings for the day. The description should provide some sense of the author's/authors' thesis, who or what he/she is arguing for or against, the assumptions he or she makes, how the work in question undertakes the work of practical theology, and two or three questions for discussion.
4. For sessions 5 and 8, PhD students will provide brief written (750 words) response papers as follows:
Session 5. From the assigned methodological chapters in Miller-McLemore, choose three methods that appear most relevant to your discipline. a) What makes them relevant to your discipline? b) How are they used by your discipline? c) How might you use them and why?
Session 8. From the assigned chapters in Cahalan and Mikoski, choose one perspective that most challenges your own perspective. a) What assumptions do you have about this

perspective that makes it challenging to you? b) In what ways does this perspective call for a reorientation of your own perspective on the work of practical theology? c) What might be some of the consequences of this change in perspective for your work?

5. Each MA/MDiv student will provide two written (750 words) responses—the first to Bass, et. al., *Christian Practical Wisdom* and the second to either Browning's *Fundamental Practical Theology* or Graham's *Between a Rock and a Hard Place*. The response should identify the author's/authors' thesis, who or what he/she is arguing for or against, the assumptions he or she makes, and the implications the students sees for the practice of ministry.
6. All students will work with a colleague to introduce the work of a practical theology scholar from his/her field of study, drawing from the list of supplemental readings below (weeks 9-10). How you provide this introduction is to be determined by you and your colleague(s), but each should attend to the author's thesis, who or what he/she is arguing for or against, the assumptions he or she makes, the method(s) the author uses to undertake her/his work, and the implications you see for your own research and the practice of ministry.
7. Each student will present a report on developing research and theological reflection from the perspective of practical theology that will be refined into a *final paper*. These reports will occur in week 13.
8. Each student will complete a final paper:
 - a. For PhD students, a final 6000-7000 word paper that critically engages at least two of the models of practical theology discussed in the seminar, articulates one's own developing practical theology in light of these models, and explores a question of church or public practice in light of these models. Students are encouraged to develop this with an eye to their dissertation research agenda.
 - b. For MA/MDiv students, a 4500-5000 word final paper that engages at least one of the models of practical theology discussed in the seminar as a framework for exploring a question of church or public practice. This may draw on material from your own practice of ministry.

All papers are to be completed in an inclusive manner, sensitive to issues of sexism, racism, and ageism in the English language. All papers must reflect accurate use of [Chicago](#) / [Turabian](#) or [APA](#) styles, depending on the student's disciplinary location. Specific details on all papers and rubrics for grading will be provided on the course Moodle site. All assignments must be completed to receive a passing grade for the course.

Required Texts:

(Unless otherwise indicated, all prices are based on recent Amazon.com searches.)

Dorothy Bass, et. al., *Christian Practical Wisdom* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2016). ISBN 978-0-8028-6873-2. \$19.04.

Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990). ISBN 978-0804720113. \$21.23. (Note: we will use only pp. 23-141.)

Don S. Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology: Descriptive and Strategic Proposals* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991). ISBN 978-0800625184. \$29.95.

Kathleen Cahalan and Gordon Mikoski, *Opening the Field of Practical Theology* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014). ISBN 978-0742561267. \$25.08.

Elaine Graham, *Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Public Theology in a Post-Secular Age* (London: SCM Press, 2013). ISBN 978-0334045984. \$54.23.

Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, ed., [*The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology*](#) (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2012). ISBN 978-1444330823. \$55.22. (While you may wish to own this, it is available digitally through the library at the above link. You must log in with your NU passport id.)

Miroslav Volf and Dorothy Bass, ed., *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2002). ISBN 978-0802849311. \$24.00.

Graham Ward, *Cultural Transformation and Religious Practice* (New York: Cambridge, 2005). ISBN 978-0521540742. \$45.89.

Supplemental Readings:

Students will also choose, in consultation with the instructor, one text from the following list to present to the class with a colleague. These will be available on reserve in the library.

Dale P. Andrews, *Practical Theology for Black Churches: Bridging Black Theology and African American Folk Religion* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002).

Mark Lau Branson and Juan F. Martinez, *Churches, Cultures and Leadership: A Practical Theology of Congregations and Ethnicities* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011).

Kathleen Cahalan, *Introducing the Practice of Ministry* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2010).

Edward Farley, *Practicing Gospel: Unconventional Thoughts on the Church's Ministry* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003).

Mary McClintock Fulkerson, *Places of Redemption: Theology for a Worldly Church* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

Thomas Groome, *Will There Be Faith: A New Vision for Educating and Growing Disciples* (New York: HarperOne, 2011).

Emmanuel Yartekwei Lartey, *In Living Color: An Intercultural Approach to Pastoral Care and Counseling* (Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley, 2003).

Emmanuel Yartekwei Lartey, *Postcolonializing God: An African Practical Theology* (London: SCM, 2013).

Joyce Mercer, *Welcoming Children: A Practical Theology of Childhood* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2005).

Richard Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2008).

James N. Poling, *Rethinking Faith: A Constructive Practical Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011).

Jack Seymour, *Teaching the Way of Jesus* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2014).

John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research Methods* (London: SCM, 2006).

Mai-Anh Tran, *Reset the Heart: Unlearning Violence, Relearning Hope* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2017).

Johannes Van der Ven and Barbara Schu, *Practical Theology: An Empirical Approach* (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 1998).

Schedule

1. (Feb. 6) Introduction: Practice and Practices

Readings: Aristotle, [Nicomachean Ethics, Book VI](#)

Bourdieu, *Logic of Practice*, 23-141.

Volf and Bass, *Practicing Theology*, 13-48.

2. (Feb. 13) Practical Theology and Cultural Transformation

Reading: Graham Ward, *Cultural Transformation and Religious Practice*

3. (Feb. 20) Practical Theology: History and Foundations

Readings: Bass, et. al., *Christian Practical Wisdom*, 1-19, 145-321.

Cahalan and Mikoski, *Opening the Field*, 45-59.

4. and 5. (Feb. 27 and Mar. 5) Practical Theology: Methodological Frameworks

Readings: Miller-McLemore, *Practical Theology*, Part II, pp. 89-266.

Poling, *Rethinking Theology*, Appendices 1 and 2, pp. 137-170. (available on Moodle)

Cahalan and Mikoski, *Opening the Field*, pp. 61-78, 115-152, 187-202.

Week 5: PhD writing assignment 4a due.

6. (Mar. 12) Explorations in Practical Theology

Readings: Bass, et. al., *Christian Practical Wisdom*, 23-141.

Volf and Bass, *Practicing Theology*, 51-181.

7. (Mar. 19) Perspectives on Practical Theology

Reading: Browning, *Fundamental Practical Theology*

MA/MDiv writing assignment 5a due.

March 26 Spring Break—no class

8. (April 2) Perspectives on Practical Theology

Readings: Miller-McLemore, *Practical Theology*, Part IV, pp. 397-462.

Cahalan and Mikoski, *Opening the Field*, pp. 11-44, 97-114, 153-168, 233-270.

PhD writing assignment 4b due.

April 9: Holy Week—no class

9. and 10. (Apr. 16 and 23) Perspectives on Practical Theology

Student Presentations on Supplemental Texts

Reading: Miller-McLemore, *Practical Theology*, Part I, 21-88.

11. (Apr. 30) Practical and Public Theology

Reading: Graham, *Between a Rock and a Hard Place*

MA/MDiv writing assignment 5b due.

12. (May 7) Faculty Panel on Practical Theology?

Readings: Miller-McLemore, *Practical Theology*, Part III, pp. 267-396.

Volf and Bass, *Practicing Theology*, 185-242.

13. (May 12) Student Presentations on Final Projects

Note the change of day for the final class session on May 12.

Final papers due: 5 pm May 25, unless you are a graduating student. Graduating students must have all work completed by 9 am May 11.