

TPM 501
Introduction to the Theology and Practice of Ministry
First Quarter, Fall 2012
Virginia Theological Seminary

Monday and Thursday, 9:00-11:50, Lettie Pate Evans (LPE) Classroom in Addison
Service learning times as arranged (15 hours total, *not including orientation and travel*)

Instructors: The Rev. Dr. David Gortner (dgortner@vts.edu)
 Dr. Lisa Kimball (lkimball@vts.edu)
 The Rev. Dr. Joyce Mercer (jmercerc@vts.edu)
Teaching Assistant: Mr. Connor Newlun (cnewlun@vts.edu)

This course offers an introduction to the theology and practice of ministry, and to the discipline of practical theology. It is intended to assist first year Master's level students in establishing several foundational skills and frameworks for critical theological reflection in relation to three interrelated areas of Christian ministry: 1) personal and ministerial vocation; 2) cultures and contexts of ministry; and 3) practices and habits for spiritually grounded leadership in ministry.

Note that this is **an intensive, three-credit course**, completed in the timeframe of one quarter.

By the end of this class students should be able to demonstrate:

1. A beginning ability to engage in the art of theological reflection about self, community, church, the Christian tradition, and ministry, demonstrated in various parts of the course's portfolio assignment including case studies, life narrative, and other documents.
2. The ability to describe and reflect theologically on the social context of your service-learning work, through context analysis in case study work, class discussions, reflections on simulation experiences, and other assignments;
3. Clarity about your own theology of ministry, emerging from your own history, and based on class participation, reading, observation and personal reflection on your own gifts and challenges for your vocation, ministry and leadership.
4. Emerging clarity about practices and habits of spiritually- rooted leadership, and the formation of a working plan for developing these through your course of study in seminary and beyond.

Required Texts:

Kate Braestrup, *Here If You Need Me*
Richard Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction*
Mary Clark Moschella, *Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice: An Introduction*
World Council of Churches, *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry*
Selected readings as assigned and posted on course website

Expectations and Assignments

Orientation: 1 p.m., August 9th.

Students are required to attend a class orientation, 1:00-2:00 p.m., August 9th to discuss the course structure, sign up for service learning sites, and determine what preparation or further orientation is required to volunteer at the site chosen.

Opening retreat: Thursday, August 23rd.

We gather for a day-long retreat (9 a.m. through 8 p.m. {with dinner}) the first day of class to lay the foundations for a learning community and the basic practices of practical theology.

Service Learning: Students will be responsible for completing 15 hours of service learning at one of the pre-approved sites. Among the expectations that will be articulated more fully at the class orientation and opening retreat is that student learning is to occur in the context of service to meet the needs of the host agency/program and its clients. By design, this is **not** an opportunity for proselytizing.

Group Reflection on Service Learning: Each student will be assigned to a small group facilitated by one of the three instructors. Many class days will include intentional time in these groups for theological reflection on your experience in your service learning contexts. Each student will discuss with the group experiences from his/her service learning site – including one formal case study – as a starting point for discussion.

Keep a private reflection journal during the whole of the class to inform your logs, case study, and the final portfolio. Plan to use it for 1) observations of your field education site, 2) reflections on what you are reading and how it helps you to articulate a theology of ministry in your context and 3) reflections on your own spiritual practice and growth during the two weeks of this intensive course. [This will not be turned in].

Logs: (20% of final grade) There are five log assignments due across the quarter. In these log assignments, you will engage the practical theological tasks described by Osmer and Moschella in relation to experiences and observations in your service learning site. Logs are due to your assigned small group leader by the beginning of the class on the dates assigned, and should be submitted electronically.

Log entry #1 – Entering a new context: In your new service-learning site (and its surrounding neighborhood), use participant-observer and listening skills to enter, notice, and describe this new context and “what is happening.” Use Osmer ch. 1 and Moschella chs. 2, 5 for direction.

Log entry #2 – Clarifying questions and deep listening: With people in your service-learning site, ask clarifying questions and other gentle probing questions to gain understanding of your site, its purposes, its practices, and its assumptions – and the assumptions and practices of different types of people involved. Use Moschella chs. 2, 6 and Osmer chs. 1, 2 for direction.

Log entry #3 – Using diverse knowledge sources to understand and interpret a situation: Drawing upon the diverse resources provided in the “reading packets” specific to your service-learning context (including resources from psychology, sociology, theology, and education), examine a particular situation from different perspectives to gain insight into deeper levels of “why this is happening.” Use Osmer ch. 2 and Moschella ch. 8 as well as additional readings (posted on course website) and class examples for direction.

Log entry #4 – Considering prophetic and holy perspectives in relation to a living context: Using biblical and theological texts (including course readings) in conversation with experiences and situations in your service learning site, identify ways in which the work and culture of your service

learning site both reflect and fall short of Christian visions of “what should be happening.” Use Osmer ch. 3 and additional theological readings for direction.

Log entry #5 – Assessing the spiritual roots of leadership in action: Considering deeper issues at stake in your service learning site, ask to “shadow” and observe people in action at the site; in addition (or as an alternative) request and read material about how this organization is set up, structured, organized, and designed to function. Identifying a couple of critical positive and/or negative issues faced by the organization, as well as prophetic theological perspectives on those issues, assess how leadership effectively “leans into” those prophetic visions and how leadership might be more effective. Conclude with what resources for leadership you might bring to bear on the mission of this organization, from your own sense of spiritual and pragmatic strengths—and what you might want to learn and develop further in your own spiritually grounded leadership for ministry in such a context. Use Osmer ch. 4 and resources on spiritual leadership for direction.

Case Study: (20% of final grade) On your day for a case study, plan to present for 15-20 minutes an incident or experience from your service learning site that invites theological reflection. Note that the event/incident does not need to be dramatic or extreme to offer rich learning. Begin by saying something about the context and your relationship. Then describe the situation using the basic questions suggested in Osmer’s introduction: What is going on? Why is this going on? What ought to be going on? How might I/we respond? Feel free to adapt these questions to the situation you wish to discuss, and to draw on spiritual and theological resources offered in class. You may find you need to focus more on one question/approach than on another. This is fine. The point is to reflect theologically on this ministry situation, the organizational context, and yourself as a person engaged in service there, and to open the situation up for discussion with classmates. (Hand in your presentation version of this case study so that your instructor can offer you feedback).

Portfolio: Final assessment of student work (60% of final grade) in the class will be based on a portfolio (print or electronic) of work that will be put together as the course proceeds.

Like an artist who puts together a portfolio by developing works gradually over time, modifying them on the basis of new skills and learning, and including a wide variety of pieces toward demonstrating the depth and breadth of her/his skills, your *Course Portfolio* should be something you work on across six weeks of this course. It is an intentional collection of items (often referred to as artifacts) you choose and put together in a way that tells the story of what you have learned. It is a vehicle for you to demonstrate your learning, and for your professor to assess/evaluate your learning in the course. The portfolio is a collection of work through which you show the depth and breadth of your knowledge and skills in the course.

Note that this portfolio will be available to integrate learning and record theological and vocational reflections throughout the M.Div. degree. Entering MDiv Juniors (Fall 2012) will be required to revisit and resubmit a revised and expanded portfolio in a required Spring 2015 TPM Capstone Course.

At minimum (and this is only a minimum), each portfolio must include:

1. A **cover letter** introducing your work in the course in relation to the course objectives. This letter gives the rationale for why you have included the particular “artifacts” that comprise your portfolio.
2. A **focused life narrative:** Beginning with your “River of Life” exercise, integrate additional course texts, experiences, and material to engage in practical theological reflection on your own life.

3. **Reflections on work in the service learning environment**, including the logs, the case study as presented in small group and a further reflection integrating insights from further reading, discussion of the case, and ongoing theological inquiry into the situation.
4. A description of and commentary on the **spiritual practices that shape your faithful public ministry**.
5. A **summative statement about your emerging theology of ministry**, drawing from your readings, observations, experiences, and reflections. As a basic foundation, begin with (but do not rely solely on) theologies of Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry.

Yet, the portfolio is not merely a matter of your taking these items, sticking them into a folder, and handing them in. The interesting and important part of your portfolio lies in *how* you use these five required items, along with other items you select, to demonstrate the four learning outcomes, “competencies” or knowledge and practice elements related to the course

In addition to these assignments, course participants are expected to:

- a. Observe seminary policies on intellectual integrity/plagiarism: provide appropriate citation for sources, including Internet sources, in written materials.
- b. Exercise awareness and sensitivity about the language we use: Recognizing the power of language to both express and shape reality, students are expected to use gender inclusive language in speaking and writing about persons; and to utilize a variety of forms of expansive speech referencing the Divine. See Handbook of Academic Regulations and Policies, pp. 25-26 for guidelines.
- c. **Students with documented learning differences/disabilities:** please make this known to the professors so that appropriate plans may be made for addressing learning needs.

Course Schedule of Work

DATE	CLASS TIME	ASSIGNMENTS ETC
August 9	Orientation Session	Apply for Service Learning Site
Thursday, August 23	Retreat Day	Braestrup, <i>Here If You Need Me</i> Osmer, Introduction & Chapter 1
Monday, September 3	CLASS DOES NOT MEET	MBTI completed online by midnight Sept. 4

Thursday, September 6	What is Ministry? Descriptive Empirical Task Case Study	Moschella, chapters 1, 2 Ministry section from <i>Baptism, Eucharist, Ministry</i> (online) Baptismal Covenant, <i>BCP</i> pp. 304-306
Monday, September 10	Entering New Contexts and Cultures Introduction to The Interpretive Task	Osmer, chapter 2 Moschella, chapter 5 Service Learning begins
Thursday, September 13	The Interpretive Task The Normative and Pragmatic Tasks The Case of Ecumenism Case Study continued Further reflection on Entering New Contexts	Moschella, chapter 6 Baptism, Eucharist, from <i>BEM</i> Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral, <i>BCP</i> pp. 876- 878 Log entry #1 due
Monday, September 17	MBTI Day	Reading TBA
Thursday, September 20	Interdisciplinary Reflection in the Service of Interpretive Work with Contexts	Osmer, chapter 3 Log entry #2 due Small group discussions begin
Monday, September 24	The Interpretive Task, continued Contextual analysis	Reading "packets" specific to contexts of service learning Moschella, chapter 8
Thursday, September 27	The Normative/Prophetic Task Theological Reflection	Readings online: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stone & Duke, <i>Think Theologically</i>, ch. 1 - Bakke, <i>Theology as Big...</i>chapter 10 - Taylor from <i>The Preaching Life</i> - Ting from <i>Love Never Ends</i> - Dozier, <i>Dream of God</i>, , chapter 1 Log entry #3 due
Monday, October 1	The Normative / Prophetic Task continued The Pragmatic Task	Osmer, chapter 4
Thursday, October 4	Spiritually Rooted Leadership	Kater, ch. 2 Other readings TBA Log entry #4 due

Monday, October 8	NO CLASS: HOLIDAY	-----
Thursday, October 11	What Is and Where Is Mission?	Readings online: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bosch, <i>Transforming Mission</i>, excerpt - Other readings TBA Log entry #5 due
Monday, October 15	What Then Is Ministry?	Readings online: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ordination Rites: Episcopal <i>BCP</i> pp. 525-534; Roman Catholic; Presbyterian <i>BCW</i> - Wilson, <i>Clericalism</i>, chs. 1, 2 - Norris, pp. 62-80
Thursday, October 18 Monday class schedule	Last Class: Closing Matters Portfolio Assignment Review Habits and Practices for Ministerial Leadership	
