

# THEOLOGICAL METHOD IN PASTORAL COUNSELING

## PC 100-3, Spring 2007

Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary

Monday 11:00 a.m.-12:20 p.m.

Studio II

### Instructor:

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*This online syllabus should be used to gain a better understanding of the content and focus of a course. The syllabus given out in the class may differ from this online version and its content supercedes that of the online syllabus.*

### Continuation of Fall 2006 Syllabus

By the end of the semester, students will be able to

1. Describe critical elements of theological reflection in pastoral counseling such as:
  - Sources of information and authority for reflection,
  - Critical priorities for reflection in counseling practice,
  - Hermeneutical and dialogical processes that construct reflective practice,
  - How to establish criteria for clinical decision-making grounded in theological reflection, and
  - How reflection intersects with and broadens the scope of pastoral practice.
2. Analyze a variety of theological reflective methods in pastoral counseling representing diverse theological frames of reference.
3. Demonstrate competence in reflecting theologically on clinical material using one method of reflection that integrates the student's own theological heritage, faith stand, and critically-engaged theological and behavioral science sources.
4. Establish a frame for making decisions about prayer, scripture, and religious resources in therapy.

### Evaluation and Grading

- Class attendance and participation. Sixty per cent (60 %) of the grade for this class will reflect the degree to which the student engages and participates in the theological reflection method. This includes demonstration that specified readings, case presentations, and participation in discussion is satisfied. The class sessions will interact around theological and clinical material that will guide class participation through the semester. The sources of the theological and clinical material used for interaction and theological reflection are the student's work with clients. Due to the clinical nature of case material, rules of confidentiality apply. Students are professionals in training in the field of Marriage and Family Therapy and members in the American Association of Pastoral Counselors.

- Reflection paper (20%). This paper is to be no more than 7 pages in length, doubled spaced and typed. The purpose of the paper is to demonstrate 1) what was learned about theological reflective methods 2) how the process of theological reflection over the semester has informed your work with diagnosis of clinical cases, 3) how theological reflection methods may contribute to the growth and formation for your chosen vocation, and 4) how the use of theological methods assist you in the movement toward the conceptualization of your practical theology. Be as specific as possible.

#### Steps In Practical Theology Method

1. Begin with a lived experience (vignette, video or verbatim)
  2. Clarify critical awareness of perspectives and interests
  3. Correlate competing perspectives from culture and the religious tradition
  4. Interpret meaning and value
  5. Broader critique of interpretation
  6. Guidelines and specific plans for a specific community
    - Practical knowledge
    - Descriptive knowledge (tells what is)
    - Normative Knowledge (tells what ought to be)
- Case study (20%). Each class member will present cases as part of the class reflective process. Before the end of the semester, each student will write one full case study showing how theological reflective process informed their work with a specific client, couple, or family. The case study should consist of the information (be sure and protect client identities) presented to the class, along with the original formulation for treatment. Following class reflection on the case, an addendum will be added to the case showing how reflection informed the treatment process through the following: a) revised treatment plan and goals and/or, b) shift in theoretical approach, expansion of intervention in the case, or expanded awareness of processes active in treatment, and c) a brief pastoral/theological summary/revision to reflect theological issues active for clients, therapist, and the therapeutic process. This addendum should be between three and five pages long.

#### Method

- **Each class period a designated student will present a case** (in the case of co-therapy, students will share the presentation). Preparation for class must include a brief, written summary of the case which includes: a) demographic description of clients, b) statement of presenting problem, c) therapist's brief conceptualization of the problem in a personal and systemic framework, d) a very brief summary of treatment to date (including theoretical frame for treatment, treatment goals, and any assessment of progress, e) a thoughtful theological reflection of the case derived from the themes that emerge in the therapy process to include how the theological reflection informs treatment, and f) *a brief statement of what the therapist(s) would like to gain from the reflection process.*

- **Each class period a designated student begins the class with a five-minute meditation or spiritual resource offered.** The meditation or aesthetic offering speak personally to the student who offers it to the class.
- **Several readings are required during the semester to broaden theological perspectives in reflection. Readings are on reserve in the library.**
- **Class sessions will consist of theological reflection on student-presented cases.** Each class session a member will be appointed to “voice” particular conversation partners in the class dialogue. Students should be prepared to put themselves in “character” to “voice” for the perspective of a) a specific theory, b) scripture as interpreted through their own faith tradition’s exegetical tradition (or other as designated), c) systematic or doctrinal theology, d) history of their own (or other selected) faith tradition, and e) their personal faith journey and history.
- **Class sessions will be described during the first session of class.**

**Required Texts: (on reserve in library)**

*The Pilgrim Book of Bible Stories* (2003). Cleveland OH: The Pilgrim Press.

Wimberly, E. P. (1994) *Using Scripture in Pastoral Counseling*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.

Koenig, H. G. (Ed.). (2005). *Faith and mental health: Religious resources and healing*. West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Foundation