

**Saint Paul School of Theology**  
**THL512 Theology and The Church's Ministry**  
**January 2007**

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**Class Meeting:** January 15-19, 2007  
Kansas-Winger Building Room 309

**Course Description:**

*Catalog Description:* This D.Min. seminar requires the examination and analysis of one's own setting for and practice of ministry for greater theological awareness and theological integrity. It explores the importance and relevance of particular doctrines (e.g., sin, Christology, ecclesiology, soteriology) to specific ministerial practices, so as to deepen and broaden the interface of one's theology and tasks of the church's ministry. One's own theological perspective is identified and developed. [Prerequisite: DMIN510]

*Topic:* Theological integrity requires coherence in doctrines, ministry, and ethics, and sometimes the word *praxis* is used to describe the reciprocity and integrity of theology and action. Persons and ministries become fragmented when avowed theologies (expressed in words) and real theologies (expressed in actions) create tension and undermine praxis. While the course cannot cover an unlimited number of doctrines and topics, the content and discussion can suggest models and facilitate practice in developing coherent theological statements that form a solid rationale for ministry and praxis. For the sake of limiting the scope of the course, the examples or cases focus on topics in science, theology, and ministry. The focus is relevant for contemporary ministries, which require clergy and lay ministers to be public theologians and congregational leaders capable of guiding communities in engaging science and medical issues. However, the course provides sufficient opportunity for students to explore doctrines and science issues most relevant to their own ministries and degree interests. [Note that the course is 2 credit hours, and students will be obligated to complete a total of 20-30 pages of writing.]

## Course Teaching-Learning Objectives

1. Teaching and learning theology begin with understanding method (how scholars investigate topics and draw conclusions), sources (what information scholars consult to form new ideas), and language (how scholars express ideas). Students should familiarize themselves with scholarly methods in theology, which equip them to be life-long learners and public theologians.
2. Teaching and learning depend on sophisticated reading of texts. Students should develop the skills of empathetic and critical reading. The diverse contexts that form theology create worldviews that may not be your own. Diverse worldviews demand charitable readings of texts for the sake of understanding the authors' points of view and with awareness that theology is neither abstracted from culture nor limited to singular "correct" forms of expression.
3. Teaching and learning involve critical thinking, analysis, evaluation, and synthesis. While the Christian tradition equips ministers to face a world rapidly changing in response to scientific developments, theology does not provide prefabricated expressions to meet unprecedented discoveries. Interdisciplinary reflection forms the heart of constructive theology and is the life work of ordained and lay leaders of the church. One goal of the course is practice in forming theological positions that have the potential to support ethics, ministry, and praxis.
4. Teaching and learning lead to praxis. One outcome is recognition of how theological worldviews shape the way we live, how we engage ministry/Christian vocation, and how we relate to God and the world.

## Required and Recommended Texts

Birch, Charles. *Feelings*. UNSW Press.

Cole-Turner, Ronald, and Brent Waters. *Pastoral Genetics: Theology and Care at the Beginning of Life*. Pilgrim Press.

Gilkey, Langdon Brown. *Blue Twilight: Nature, Creationism, and American Religion*. Augsburg Fortress.

Haught, John F. *Promise of Nature: Ecology and Cosmic Purpose*. Wipf & Stock.

Hoezee, Scott. *Proclaim the Word: Engaging Science on Sunday*. Baker Publishing Group.

Holmes, Barbara Ann. *Race and Cosmos: An Invitation to View the World Differently*. Continuum.

Kowalski, Gary. *The Souls of Animals*. Revised and expanded 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Stillpoint Publishing.

McGrath, Alister E. *The Science of God: An Introduction to Scientific Theory*. Eerdmans.

[All required texts are available at Cokesbury Bookstore at Saint Paul School of Theology. The books are also easily purchased online at Barnes and Noble, Amazon, or other vendors. If any students need books to be placed on reserve at the Dana Dawson Library at Saint Paul, please email the instructor and make the request.]

## Advance Assignments

1. Begin preparation for the course by reading two books by pastors who attempt to connect their personal spiritual lives and ministries with insights from science. Pay attention to how science informs their work and how science and ministry are integrated. The two books are (a) Hoezee, *Proclaim the Word* and (b) Kowalski, *The Souls of Animals*.
2. After reading Hoezee and Kowalski, try your hand at preparing a sermon, devotion, essay, adult education lesson, or pastoral letter. Write 5-7 pages (double-spaced, with one-inch margins) that reflect on an issue or discovery in science. Write the paper as a Word software document and email the document to [howellnr@spst.edu](mailto:howellnr@spst.edu) no later than January 1, 2007.
3. Read Cole-Turner and Waters' *Pastoral Genetics*. Note how the book models development of a theology informed by and in dialogue with science to meet needs for pastoral care at the beginning of life and with persons who anticipate the birth of a child.
4. After reading *Pastoral Genetics*, write a 3-5 page response to the book. Half of the response must explore why science is important for ministry and why ministry is critical in an age of rapidly growing genetic testing and therapies. The second half of the response should raise critical issues and questions that arise in relation to your own ministry focus. Remember to focus on theology rather than ethics! Write the essay as a double-spaced document with one-inch margins, and email the document as a Word software attachment to [howellnr@spst.edu](mailto:howellnr@spst.edu) no later than January 1, 2007.
5. Complete all reading assignments by careful reading of required texts by Birch (*Feelings*), Gilkey (*Blue Twilight*), Haught (*Promise of Nature*), Holmes (*Race and the Cosmos*), and McGrath (*The Science of God*). Read the books in any order you like, but pay special attention to (a) what doctrines are emphasized, (b) how science functions in dialogue with theology, and (c) how you think the books might inform ministry. At this point, the books function as key examples of how to integrate theology and science. No writing assignment is required, but students are expected to refer to the texts in class discussions. [Do not wait until January 1 to start reading this list of books. While writing assignments are due no later than January 1, you must begin work far earlier in order to complete all reading assignments.]
6. Prior to the January class meetings, identify the central focus of your ministry in terms of type of ministry (preaching, education, chaplaincy, lay ministry, etc.). Next identify a doctrine and a theologian who are most formative in your spiritual and professional development. Bring a 30-page excerpt from the theologian's writing on the doctrine to class. You will need the excerpt to participate in class learning activities. The intention is that the article not be part of the assigned reading of the course, but a true reflection of your theological formation.

### Class Sessions: January 15-19, 2007

1. Note that the class will meet on the Saint Paul School of Theology campus. Monday through Thursday, the class meets 9:00-noon and 1:00-4:00 p.m. Friday, January 19, the class meets 9:00-noon and 1:00-2:00 p.m. All students are expected to be in attendance.
2. Class sessions will include short lectures or media presentations, individual and small group reflection, and class discussions informed by pre-assignments, focused on particular cases or examples, and preparatory for the final paper.

### Final Assignment

1. Upon completion of the January 15-19 class sessions, students are required to write a final paper integrating science, ministry, and theology. Continue to work with the doctrine and theologian selected as most important for your spiritual and professional formation, as well as the ministry most definitive for your Christian vocation.
2. Begin with a science article, but be sure the article has scientific integrity and quality—in other words, opinion pieces from the newspaper do not meet the criteria. Two journals and two websites are highly recommended for the quality of science and theology sources, and they may be helpful for in finding science information. The two journals are *Theology and Science* and *Zygon*. Two websites are <http://www.metanexus.net> and <http://www.counterbalance.org>.
3. Develop the integrative essay by considering how your theology equips you to respond to the science and how the science issue affects your ministry. Do not leap to or include discussions about ethics or explanations of “how to” do ministry. Instead develop the theology to meet the science that you are learning. After practice in class, this should not be a new exercise, but a more extended and developed expression of constructive theology responding to science based on your choices and interests.
4. The final paper must be 12-15 pages, inclusive of title page, footnotes or endnotes, and bibliography. Remember to double-space and allow one-inch margins. Follow Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual of Style for Writers of Term Paper, Theses, and Dissertations* (sixth edition) in formatting your paper.
5. Finally, be sure to save the document as a Word software file. Send the attachment in an email to [howellnr@spst.edu](mailto:howellnr@spst.edu) no later than February 1, 2007. ***With every paper in the course, students have responsibility to be sure that the attachment is actually sent with the email and that the professor has received the paper. Use delivery and read notices, and send a copy to yourself to check that no technical errors have occurred.***

## **Inclusive Language**

In both oral and written contributions to the course, students are expected to be conscious of the power of language in theology. Inclusive language attends to all kinds of diversity (e.g., age, class, disability, gender, nationality, religion, race/ethnicity). Students are especially accountable to reflect the language of other authors' writing as part of the content of their theology.

## **Grading**

At the end of the term, students receive letter grades in accordance with policies and descriptions outlined in the current catalog.

Class Participation	<u>  30  </u> %
First Writing Assignment	<u>  20  </u> %
<i>Pastoral Genetics</i> Response	<u>  20  </u> %
Final Paper	<u>  30  </u> %

## Criteria for Evaluating Course Work

Regardless of whether you write a paper, answer an essay question, voice an oral presentation, or create any original project, the academic context requires that certain minimal requirements characterize your work. While there are subjective components in the grading process, most professors are concerned that you become well educated in four basic qualities of excellent academic work:

1. ***Demonstration of an empathetic understanding of the content of text and resources.*** Your topic should not only be well researched in the library, through interviews and observations, and/or from assigned readings and class discussions, but you should be able to provide a fair description and a clear understanding of texts and resources. This is apparent in the ability to describe and discuss precisely and accurately what an author has written or a speaker has said. Evaluation, response, and critique follow accurate representation of another's ideas—earn the privilege of criticizing a viewpoint by showing that you really understand it.
2. ***Clear critical thinking that provides appropriate specific evidence for conclusions.*** Use the most precise historical, empirical, or contemporary data or information to support the claims of your thesis and paragraphs. Conclusions follow from and are supported by evidence. Be sure that your evidence is relevant, accurate, and detailed. Adherence to clear critical thinking, relevant and accurate evidence, and logical organization constitute sound arguments. Even creative writing requires logical relationships among ideas to assist your readers in following the plot or main point.
3. ***Creativity that moves beyond reporting someone else's ideas.*** Your creative addition to academic discourse might include questioning, evaluating, applying, criticizing (positively or negatively), developing, or responding. You might see a connection between two or more ideas. You might see information from a unique perspective. The minimal requirement of academic work is correctly repeating what is read or discussed. Excellent work moves beyond repetition to unique insights, organization, correlations, and theses. Work to find your own scholarly and professional voice.
4. ***Flawless grammar, spelling, and form.*** Excellent written work is conscious of proofreading and good communication. Oral presentations are equally accountable for careful expression. A brilliant thesis can be lost in a paper or project that obscures its ideas with careless communication. Your readers and listeners should not have to guess what you mean—help them by speaking and writing well.

## **Student Responsibilities**

Students must abide by policies established in the Saint Paul handbook and catalog. Pay special attention to the policies on Integrity of Work Submitted and Class Attendance. The instructor reserves the option to fail a student for a single instance of plagiarism. The professor reserves the option to fail a student strictly for habitual absence or tardiness.

As encouragement to take responsibility for their learning, students are invited to communicate with the instructor. If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of illness, if you have emergency information to share with me, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with the professor as soon as possible. Please consult with the instructor for any assistance with your learning and class attendance.

## **Professor's Responsibilities**

My job is to teach with integrity the scholarship representative of my field, to see that students learn as much as possible, and to create a comfortable environment for learning. These goals cannot be accomplished without genuine attention to unique strengths, experiences, and expectations that both the professor and students bring to the classroom. My goal is to provide encouragement and support for your learning. Sometimes flexible procedures and learning options are necessary to facilitate the kind of teaching and learning that should occur. I am anxious to hear what energizes you, what disappoints you, where you disagree, and what helps you learn. PLEASE SEE ME IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS, CONCERNS, OR SPECIFIC NEEDS.

## **Learning-Disabling Conditions**

Saint Paul faculty are committed to facilitating the learning of students capable of graduate-level seminary work. Any student who has a condition that may prevent full demonstration of his/her abilities (e.g., difficulty seeing or hearing, dyslexia, or other learning disabilities) should contact the office of the Dean of Students immediately to discuss evaluation and documentation of learning needs, alternative learning strategies that have worked for the student in the past, and mutually accountable accommodations to ensure the student's full participation and evaluation in the course. Students with documented learning disabilities must consult the Saint Paul School of Theology Handbook and comply with institutional guidelines and policies. Similarly, mental or physical conditions must be documented and discussed with the Dean of Students, who may arrange accommodations, and all handbook guidelines and policies apply.