Theological Reflection: The Practice of Ministry
Garrett COS, Summer 2016

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PLEASE NOTE: This syllabus may be changed at the discretion of the instructor.

I. Course Description:
This course emphasizes the integration of the role of the practicing pastor with the church’s theological heritage and its particular Wesleyan expression. The course also stresses theology as an ongoing task of critical reflection for the purpose of action. Consideration is given to issues, events, and institutions that form the context within which the pastor is required to think, speak, and act with theological clarity.

II. Course Objectives:

1. Continued growth of the pastor’s identity as theologian and continued development of his or her ability to address the issues and concerns of the church theologically.

2. Focus upon thinking theologically about everyday activities and contemporary events in terms of the doctrine of redemption and the spirituality of Christian ministry.

3. Reflection upon a variety of theological perspectives in order to apply a faithful critique to persons who claim to be God’s voices in our time.

4. Integration of the pastor’s theological understanding in the practice and evaluation of ministry.

5. Encouragement of lifelong theological reading, reflection, and growth.

III. Required Reading:


IV. Assignments (Before Coming to Garrett):

(A) Online Section

1. Watch the video posted on the course hub introducing you to this class and the materials we will be using.

2. Introduce yourself in the online forum. You might share your ministry setting, family background, and hobbies/interests.

3. Read Wesley’s *Plain Account of Christian Perfection*. Engage with others in the class in the online forum, asking questions and making comments about this text and how it might inform (a) your practice of ministry in the United Methodist Church and (b) your self-perception as a follower of Jesus.

(B) Written Work due by June 15, 2016

In preparation for our class time together, please complete the following assignments, and submit all the written work on the Moodle by June 15, 2016.

1. Reading and Short Reflection Paper

   Write a reflection paper of 2-3 pages on *Grace to Lead* or *Introducing the Practice of Ministry*. Ask yourself these questions: How does what we do witness to the God in Christ we proclaim? How is this text helping me think theologically about my proclamation in the practice of ministry? The reflection paper should address an area where the reading helped you think about the practice of ministry from a theological perspective.

2. Class presentation outline

   Each student will make a 15 minute presentation during the class on one chapter of *Practicing Theology*. Read all chapters of this book. Choose one chapter of your choice. Prepare to present the chapter focusing on the following questions:

   a. What are the main ideas of this chapter?

   b. How does the author challenge me in my theology and practice of ministry?

   c. What is one idea from this chapter that I might apply to my ministry setting?

   Create an outline (no longer than one page) of your presentation and submit it.
3. Daily Examen

This assignment is a form of keeping a journal, but a specific kind of taking account that is rooted in God’s presence and thankfulness thereof. Here is a description from the website linked below: “The Daily Examen is a technique of prayerful reflection on the events of the day in order to detect God’s presence and discern his direction for us. The Examen is an ancient practice in the Church that can help us see God’s hand at work in our whole experience.” The following are the five steps of the examen:

1. Become aware of God’s presence.
2. Review the day with gratitude.
3. Pay attention to your emotions.
4. Choose one feature of the day and pray from it.
5. Look toward tomorrow.

What I am asking you to do is conduct a daily examen for one week, preferably Holy Week (from Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday). Write down a sentence or two each day for each step. You may need to write more and that is permissible. Submit on the moodle by June 15, 2016. I will also share my examen with you.

Learn more about this form of spirituality here:

http://www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-prayer/the-examen/