



PROVIDENCE
— EST. 1972 —
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

THINKING AND INTERPRETING THEOLOGICALLY (DS8106)

January 3-7 (Tuesday – Saturday), 2017

9am – 4:15pm (end with lunch on Sat.)

Professor: Patrick S. Franklin, PhD

I. Course Description

This course aims to expand students' competence in biblical interpretation and theological reflection. Students will develop a deeper understanding of theological study as formative spiritual discipline essential to shaping the mind and heart for ministry praxis and cultural engagement. Within this framework, students will consider historical and contemporary approaches to biblical interpretation, analysis of trends in contemporary church and culture, and theological tensions affecting the church and its mission in North America and other parts of the world. Students will be encouraged to engage their ecclesial traditions both appreciatively and critically as they map and navigate their own theological tendencies and directions. This course is an essential for the necessary research required in the subsequent completion of a DMin project.

II. Learning Outcomes

The qualifications for the Doctor of Ministry program include the ability of the degree holder to interpret both Scripture and culture honestly and accurately, to reflect with biblical, theological, and practical depth, and to practice ministry fittingly and effectively in light of their reflection. The following objectives of this module are designed with these particular qualifications in view.

1. Students will reflect deeply on the pastoral function of Christian doctrine
2. Students will reflect on the importance of both scriptural and cultural exegesis
3. Students will gain skills in theological interpretation of Scripture
4. Students will explore and discuss – openly, honestly, and thoughtfully – difficult theological questions the church is presently encountering (e.g., relating to science, sexuality, gender, etc.)
5. Students will practice, with each other, the art of theological conversation, specifically with respect to difficult issues on which Christians deeply disagree
6. Students will consider the relationship between theology, worship, and spiritual formation and spend time examining their own assumptions and 'liturgical' practices and traditions, as well the impact of what James K. A. Smith calls 'cultural liturgies' on the church (and on individuals)
7. Students will have the opportunity apply knowledge and skills gained through the course by pursuing a specific theological topic that is directly related to their DMin projects

III. Course Requirements

A. Required Texts

1. Ellen T. Charry, *By the Renewing of Your Minds: The Pastoral Function of Christian Doctrine* (Oxford University Press, 1997).
2. Todd Billings, *The Word of God for the People of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 2010).
3. Denis Lamoureux, *Evolution: Scripture and Nature Say Yes* (Zondervan, 2016).
4. James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009). **OR:** *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013). [If you have not read either, please read *Desiring the Kingdom*; if you have read the latter, please read *Imagining the Kingdom*.]
5. Brad Harper and Drew Harper, *Space at the Table: Conversations Between an Evangelical Theologian and His Gay Son* (Portland: Zeal, 2016).
6. Preston Sprinkle, *People to be Loved: Why Homosexuality is not Just an Issue* (Zondervan, 2015).
7. Mark A. Yarhouse, *Understanding Gender Dysphoria: Navigating Transgender Issues in a Changing Culture* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2015).

B. Assignments

Pre-Module Work (to be submitted to the Professor via email by December 29, 2016 by midnight):

Course Text Reflection Papers (worth 10% each, or 60% combined, of your total grade)

Please make sure you read the required texts, in their entirety, before our module begins. The usefulness of this module for other students will depend in part on your reading and your reflection, just as its usefulness for you will depend on their reading and reflection.

Each of the following papers is to be 5-6 pages in length (double spaced, 1" margins, 12-pt, Times New Roman font). Full citations are not necessary. Just cite the page number in parentheses when discussing or quoting from the book. Where more than one book is included in the assignment, cite the author and page in parentheses.

1. For the Charry text: Please write a thoughtful reflection on the book, which answers the following questions:
 - a) In one paragraph, state succinctly your summary of the book's thesis or central idea and main supporting points. Also, identify briefly key theological concepts and/or themes discussed in the book (you don't have to explain them, just identify them). In your final sentence, indicate if it would be helpful to discuss any of these during our time together.
 - b) How is the study of theology related to the cultivation of virtue and character?
 - c) Of the various theologians discussed in the book, which did you resonate with most? Why?
 - d) Reflect personally on the pastoral function of Christian doctrine, specifically with your own vocational context in mind.
 - e) How did this book challenge you, intellectually, professionally, and personally?

2. For the Billings text: Please write a thoughtful reflection on the book, which answers the following questions:
 - a) What is 'theological interpretation' of Scripture?
 - b) What stands out as new to you about this idea/movement (theological interpretation)?
 - c) How might the practice of theological interpretation change or enrich the way you preach (and prepare sermons), and/or approach difficult theological issues (yourself; with your congregation), and/or pursue deeper integration of theology and your vocation (pastoring, counselling)? How might it impact your personal engagement with Scripture, i.e., devotionally?
 - d) Reflect on one or two themes or ideas in the book that you found especially helpful, intriguing, or challenging.
3. For the Lamoureux text: Please write a thoughtful reflection on the book, which answers the following questions:
 - a) Describe your feelings about the topic before beginning this book.
 - b) Reflect on what surprised you in the book. What caused you to think and evaluate your own views and beliefs?
 - c) If human evolution (from lower primates) did in fact take place, what implications would this have for your own theological understanding? Try to think of both positive implications and potential difficulties or challenges to your theology and faith.
 - d) Write down 4 thoughtful questions that you would like to ask the author. You don't have to write these in paragraph form. A numbered list is fine. But, be sure that your questions are clear, as concise as possible, and to the point (don't beat around the bush). You will have a chance to ask some of these questions in class (we will have a Q&A session with the author via Skype).
4. For the Smith text, write a reflection on the interconnection of theology, worship, and spiritual formation, based on major themes and/or ideas drawn from Smith. As part of your paper, describe your own church's 'liturgy' (every church service has a 'liturgy' in Smith's sense) including the values and commitments embedded in it (whether intentionally/consciously or not). Does your church's 'liturgy' reflect theological or cultural values and commitments, or both? Is your church's 'liturgy' intentional? Is it sufficiently formative, for both heart and mind, in the right ways? If your church is not intentional about its 'liturgy', you might need to ask: What are the values and commitments (theological and/or cultural) *implicit* in my church's 'liturgy', perhaps operating below the surface of our conscious awareness and thus can become conscious and explicit only upon reflection? Has Smith encouraged you to rethink the nature and function of congregational worship?
5. In light of your reading of both the Harper and Sprinkle texts, write a paper reflecting on ministering (in a pastoral or counselling sense) to gay people and their families. Your reflection might include:
 - a) How did reading the two books challenge or broaden your perspective?
 - b) How do you personally balance love, grace, and acceptance, with truth and faithfulness to Scripture? Do you struggle to integrate your theology and practice with respect to ministering to gay people and their families? Share in light of concrete, practical experience ministering to or relationships with gay people if you can.

- c) What is most difficult for you, personally, about this subject? How is your church being impacted? Do you feel like you need help in navigating this issue theologically and/or pastorally? If so, with what in particular?
 - d) List 2-3 of the most pressing questions you have about thinking through this issue biblically and theologically.
6. For the Yarhouse text: Please write a thoughtful reflection on the book, which answers the following questions:
- a) What is Gender *Dysphoria*? How does it differ from the (more general) *experience* of being transgendered?
 - b) How does the transgender experience/phenomenon differ from that of same sex attraction? What implications does this have for pastoral and/or counselling response(s)?
 - c) What are the 2-3 most important things you learned from this book?
 - d) Of the three frameworks discussed (integrity, disability, and diversity), which did you resonate with most? Why? What are the limits and/or shortcomings of that framework and how will you seek to address or mitigate them in your own theology and ministry?
 - e) Did anything in the book make you uncomfortable? Why? Spend some time with God in prayer contemplating that and briefly record your thoughts.

Post-Course Paper (40% course grade)

Your DMin project/dissertation will include some significant theological reflection. This paper is an opportunity to begin to lay the theological groundwork with respect to your chosen topic.

In consultation with the professor, choose a specific theological topic or issue that you will address, one that is most relevant to your project. This paper might involve, for example, articulating your own theological approach to an issue, or examining and articulating your own theological assumptions and their implications for approaching your project topic, or writing an integrative theological piece concerning how you will bridge two or more disciplines (e.g., Christian theology and neuroscience, or Christian convictions and sex therapy, or biblical approaches to church governance and contemporary leadership theory, etc.).

Write a 20-paged, in depth research paper on your chosen topic. The goal is to come to a specific position on a theological issue that is germane to your DMin project, thus resolving (at least provisionally) an important theological question pertaining to your project.

Begin by reading broadly on your theological topic (both books and journal articles), and then gradually tighten your focus to a specific research question on the theological issue that is most pertinent to your project.

We will discuss this assignment in greater detail during the class module.

General Guidelines for The Submission of Written Work

- a. **Style:** Style must be consistent with either APA format (for counselling track students) or (for all others) Kate L. Turabian's *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations*. For a quick reference to Turabian's style-guide, see http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/turabian/turabian_citationguide.html
- b. **Avoiding Plagiarism:** You are required to give credit to all of your sources by citing them properly. Plagiarism is a serious academic offense and can result in failing an assignment or even the course. Please consult Providence Library's citation guidelines on its webpage: http://www.providenceuc.ca/college/library/research/use_a_style_guide_or_create_a_bibliography/
- c. **Font, Margins, and Spacing:** Please submit all assignments in 12 pt. Times New Roman font and set all margins to 1". All assignments should be double-spaced unless instructed otherwise.
- d. **Academic Policies:** All students are expected to be familiar with and adhere to the academic policies outlined in the Academic Calendar (pp. 19–22), particularly concerning grading, class attendance, and academic dishonesty and plagiarism.
- e. **Content:** All papers should be characterized by the following:
 - i) Accuracy (Is what I say correct? Is it true to the case?)
 - ii) Comprehensiveness (Have I covered all the points that need to be covered?)
 - iii) Clarity in structure (Is there a self-evident and meaningful order to the paper?)
 - iv) Clarity in content (Will the reader correctly understand what I have tried to say?)
 - v) Specificity (Have I moved beyond generalities and made specific statements?)
 - vi) Thorough and accurate documentation (use Turabian or *Chicago Manual of Style*)
- f. **Title Page.** Include the title of the paper, name of the course, name of the professor, date of submission, and your name (and campus mailbox if you have one). Do not submit papers in any type of binder or cover: a staple in the top left corner of the paper will suffice. A table of contents page is not necessary.

IV. Tentative Course Schedule, Content and Supplementary Readings

DATE	TOPIC
Tues. AM (morning)	Welcome & Orientation to the Course The Practice of Theology Theological Sources The Importance of Cultural Exegesis
Tues. PM	Theological Interpretation of Scripture Discussion of Billings, based on student papers.
Wed. AM	Ethics, Character, and Theological Interpretation of Scripture Continue discussion of Billings; discuss Franklin essay (emailed to you).
Wed. PM	Reflecting Theologically About Science, part 1 Discussion of Lamoureux, based on student papers. Q&A Session with Denis Lamoureux via Skype
Thurs. AM	Reflecting Theologically About Science, part 2 A biblical-theological framework for engaging science
Thurs. PM	Reflecting Theologically About LGBT issues, part 1: Homosexuality Discussion of Harpers, based on student papers.
Friday AM	Reflecting Theologically About LGBT issues, part 2: Transgender issues Discussion of Yarhouse, based on student papers.
Friday PM	Worship and Theological Formation of Hearts and Minds Discussion of Smith, based on student papers.
Sat. AM	The Relationship of Theology and Study to the Practice of Ministry Discussion of Charry, based on student papers.
End with lunch together on Saturday	