AREA IV: MINISTERIAL STUDIES

The biblical and theological heritage of Christianity finds focus in engagement with persons and structures of the church and culture. The revelations of the Bible and theology, by their very nature, require ever-renewed lodging and expression in the ongoing life of both the church and the world. The church and the world, by their natures, require ever-renewed rooting and direction in the Christian heritage. It is a lifetime vocation to learn to discern and guide the processes of this reciprocal engagement. Area IV aspires to find guidelines and impetus for this vocation. All courses in Area IV presuppose some personal experience with the occasions of ministry. Although some Area IV courses have no prerequisites and are appropriate for entering students, students normally will wait until their second year to begin their preaching courses.

PASTORAL THEOLOGY AND CARE

REL 807a or b, Introduction to Pastoral Theology and Care  Staff
As an introduction to pastoral theology and care, this course explores the history, theory, and methods of the care of souls tradition, concentrating on the narrative, communal-contextual model. The course invites learners into the practice of particular pastoral care skills such as: listening and responding in pastoral conversations; supporting families through life transitions; “reading” and engaging cultural contexts and systems of injustice in which care takes place; and the intentional uses of the self in spiritual care. The course introduces at a basic level key theoretical frameworks including narrative, intercultural/interreligious care; family systems; grief and trauma theory. Teaching and learning methods include lecture, discussion, case studies, role plays, theological reflection, genograms, and visits to local ministry sites. Area IV. 3 Course cr

REL 810b, My Neighbor’s Faith: Building Interreligious Community  Ian Oliver
As communities across the country and around the world engage religious diversity in a way they never have before, this seminar seeks to explore theoretical and practical issues in interreligious community building. The course surveys stories and research on the development of religious identity, examines how interreligious relationships and communities are formed, and considers theological and practical reasons to do interfaith work. We explore problems of representation and diversity within traditions. The class defines the qualities of effective interfaith relationships and identifies common mistakes leaders can make. Guest religious leaders from different religious traditions make presentations, students conduct interviews across traditions, and a final project seeks to create an interfaith community education experience. Area IV. 3 Course cr

REL 824a, Ministry and the Disinherited  Frederick Streets
There is a serious and vigorous public debate about social responsibilities and the influence of religious values upon us as a society, particularly upon those who are most vulnerable and in need of support. This course has as its focus the effort to theologically reflect on and discern, from an interdisciplinary approach, those who are the disinherited. The course explores aspects of the Christian religious dimensions in social and political reform movements and in faith-based social services. At the same time, students examine the influence of religious values on individual behavior and grapple with ideas about the role of the church and government meeting human needs. The course addresses, through the interests and research of the students, topics such as poverty; health care disparities; sexual orientation; ethnic, gender, and racial discrimination; hunger; immigration; homelessness; public education; and the welfare of children. Students are expected to develop an interdisciplinary approach from perspectives found in biblical scriptures, sacred texts, theological/religious beliefs and values, social work, sociology of religion, law, psychology of religion, political science, and social welfare theories. This allows students to create a contextualized theological approach to identifying the disinherited and to explore the kinds of ministries that might address the needs of these groups. Area IV and Area II. 3 Course cr

REL 829b, Pastoral Leadership and Church Administration  William Goettler
Pastoral leadership and church administration require an understanding of the nature of leadership and the use of power within congregational contexts, and a range of administrative skills, including strategic planning, group dynamics, conflict resolution, personnel management, fund raising, budgeting, building and property care, and personal planning. This course serves as an introduction to those and other themes and is particularly aimed at graduating students who plan to enter congregational ministry. Three class sessions are held in the buildings of local congregations. Enrollment limited to graduating M.Div. students. Area IV. 3 Course cr

REL 826a, Ministry and Addictions  Joyce Mercer
This course provides an introduction to the dynamics of substance abuse, addictions, and pastoral care in the lives of persons, families, and communities. The class surveys ecclesial, clinical, cultural, public policy, and historical perspectives on alcoholism and other chemical abuse/addiction, as well as behavioral or “process addictions” such as gambling and Internet addiction, with a focus on contemporary understandings of the spiritual and theological implications of these perspectives. Attention to intersectionality and the impact of poverty, race, class, gender, and sexuality on substance use and its consequences is a theme throughout. Students also consider various frameworks for promoting recovery. The course includes some experiences outside of the classroom (e.g., visits to AA/Al-Anon/ACoA meetings) and utilizes discussion, lecture, film, and action-reflection pedagogy. Area IV. 3 Course cr

REL 856a, Pastoral Wisdom in Fiction, Memoir, and Drama  Mary Clark Moschella
This course explores pastoral themes and insights that emerge through reading particular creative works of fiction, memoir, poetry, and drama, and the practice of “writing back” to them. This year the course is taught at FCI Danbury as an Inside-Out Prison Exchange course, bringing YDS students and incarcerated women together in the classroom. Through interactive exercises involving conversation,
writing, and various forms of artistic expression, the class reflects theologically on the situations, emotions, beliefs, values, and practices that this literature suggests and evokes. Area IV. Prerequisite: permission of the instructor. 3 Course cr

REL 860b, Feminist and Womanist Perspectives on Pastoral Theology and Care  Mary Clark Moschella
This seminar explores a range of feminist and womanist perspectives in pastoral theology, including intersectional and postcolonial views. The material, embodied needs of diverse women are kept in focus as the class reflects upon the pastoral functions of liberation and empowerment. We practice pastoral care skills using a narrative therapy approach. Students construct their own pastoral theologies through research papers and/or creative, practical projects. 3 Course cr

REL 876a, Psychopathology and Pastoral Care  Mary Clark Moschella
This course brings together current medical expertise in psychopathology with pastoral theology and care practices. The basics of the DSM-5 are introduced, including the history, etiology, epidemiology, and symptoms of, as well as treatments for, the major psychiatric disorders. Literature in pastoral theology as well as films and memoirs are engaged in order to gain an experiential understanding of the conditions studied. Students engage in theological reflection and practice basic skills for ministry that support and empower persons afflicted with these conditions, as well as their families and faith communities. Area IV. Prerequisite: REL 807 preferred. 3 Course cr

PREACHING MINISTRY

REL 812a, Principles and Practices of Preaching  Carolyn Sharp and Thomas Long
This is the introductory course in the theology, history, and practice of preaching. Special attention is given to biblical exegesis, the congregational context, the appropriate use of experience, the development of a homiletical imagination, the preacher’s spirituality, and engaging all of the preacher’s gifts for communication. The course includes plenary instruction by the instructors and preaching sections in which students prepare and deliver sermons. This course is a prerequisite for upper-level homiletics courses. Area IV. 3 Course cr

REL 814b, Preaching as a Pastor  Martin Copenhaver
The course examines the unique role of preaching in pastoral ministry. All preaching is contextual. It occurs in dialogue with a text and in the context of what is happening in the world today. For the pastor, however, preaching has an added dimension because it takes place in the rich context of shared life in a congregation. In such a context, the transformative power of preaching can be enhanced. In this course, students study and practice preaching as a pastoral act. Various approaches to preaching, all grounded in the role of pastor, are examined. Students are given ample opportunity to practice preaching in a workshop format. The goal is to shape an approach to preaching that deepens the engagement with both text and congregation in ways that are transformative. Area IV. Prerequisite: REL 812. 3 Course cr

REL 816b, Preaching on Ephesians  Carolyn Sharp
The Epistle to the Ephesians has been foundational for Christian ecclesiology, theology, and ethics. Elements of Ephesians influential for Christian belief and praxis include the assertion that by grace believers have been saved through faith (2:8), the avowal that Christ is our peace (2:14), the articulation of a theology of unity expressed through vocation and baptism (4:4–6), the notion that God has equipped the saints with diverse gifts for ministry (4:11–13), the exhortation to walk in love as Christ loved us (5:2), and the trope of spiritual armor with which believers may contend against spiritual forces of evil (6:10–17). This course invites students into critical reflection on Ephesians as a vitally important resource for Christian proclamation. Students engage contemporary homiletical theory, study sermons from expert preachers, and develop their own homiletical capacity by designing and preaching two sermons on texts from Ephesians. Throughout, we consider how to make the Gospel known through preaching practices that honor the complexity of the theology and rhetoric of Ephesians. Area IV. Prerequisites: REL 812, and either REL 505, REL 506, or equivalent course work taken elsewhere. 3 Course cr

REL 818b, The Hebrew Scriptures and Christian Preaching: The Writings  Carolyn Sharp
Since ancient times, the Hebrew Scriptures have constituted a vitally important set of theological resources for Christian homiletics. The ministry and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth and the New Testament traditions that grew up around him cannot be understood apart from the narratives, legal material, poetry, sapiential traditions, and theological ideation of the Hebrew Scriptures. The exquisite artfulness of ancient Hebrew narrative can engage the Christian imagination on many levels. A preacher might draw congregations into the characterization of Daniel, Ruth, Esther, or Nehemiah, or explore the dramatic conflicts and resolutions emplotted in those books. The formation of believers in wisdom is a central concern of Ecclesiastes and Proverbs, which trace knowledge of the Lord and its antitheses in ways that fascinate many in today’s church. Job and Lamentations wrestle with issues of suffering and justice in compelling poetry that can be explored powerfully from the pulpit. Through the centuries, the Psalms have been central to spiritual teaching, devotional practices, liturgical forms, and artistic refractions of lament, trust, and praise. This course invites students into critical reflection on the Writings as a rich resource for Christian proclamation. Students engage homiletical theory, study sermons from expert preachers, and design and preach sermons on texts from the Writings. Area IV. Prerequisites: REL 812; and REL 503 or REL 504, or equivalent course work (one master’s-level course or two undergraduate courses on the Hebrew Scriptures) elsewhere. 3 Course cr

REL 862a, The Gospel in Lament: Preaching for a Suffering World  Carolyn Sharp
The Hebrew Scriptures have constituted a vitally important set of theological resources for Christian homiletics since ancient times. The ministry of Jesus of Nazareth and the New Testament traditions that grew up around him cannot be understood apart from the witness of the Hebrew Scriptures. As resources for incarnational theology, the Hebrew Scriptures are unparalleled for their sustained attention to the suffering of believers and their articulation of ways in which ancient scribes responded to trauma through narratives, poetry, and other cultural forms that promoted resilience and renewed flourishing. This course is designed to help the Christian preacher proclaim the truth of the Gospel in ways that speak grace to those who suffer. Educators, activists, artists, and others in faith communities need to hear a Gospel that engages fruitfully with issues such as poverty and economic precariousness; creatively suffering and human responsibility;
systemic injustice; spiritual resilience in the face of catastrophic injury, intractable pain, or terminal illness; the fragility and strength of the human spirit in community; benefits of spiritual practices for healing and tranquility; and artistic creativity and cultural memory as resources for addressing loss and trauma. Students engage homiletical theory, analyze sermons from expert preachers, and design and preach two sermons that explore homiletical approaches to texts drawn from the Latter Prophets, biblical wisdom literature, and the Gospels. Area IV. Prerequisite: REL 812. 3 Course cr

EDUCATIONAL MINISTRY

REL 800b, Teaching as Religious Education: Its Art and Craft  Staff
This course explores the art and craft of teaching. One aspect of teaching is the educational methods used, which addresses the question, How is religious education undertaken and realized? This question is explored in the context of other educational questions that address the nature, purposes, context, and interpersonal relationships of any teaching ministry. The course meets in an intensive format, from March 11 through March 15, with most written work due on March 22. Students are expected to do required reading and writing prior to the first class meetings. Area IV. 3 Course cr

REL 801a or b, Marquand Chapel Choir  Alfred Gumbs
1 credit per term.
REL 802a or b, Marquand Gospel Choir  Mark Miller
0.5 credit per term. ½ Course cr

REL 806b, Leadership and Change  Sarah Drummond
“Leadership” and “change” are words that could, in a time like ours, seem redundant. Leaders in all varieties of organizations must work toward a vision of a reality that does not yet exist. The more quickly the world changes, the more communities of all kinds must adapt, whether they are ready or not. Community leaders must change with the times if they are to lead effectively. In this course, students learn about leadership and change in organizations that foster human transformation, such as churches, schools, and nonprofit social justice agencies. After taking the course, they will be able to define change leadership from three distinct perspectives, analyze an organization’s efforts at change, and make sense of a multidimensional situation that calls for change. Area IV. 3 Course cr

REL 811a, Models and Methods of College and University Chaplaincy  Sharon Kugler
This course explores various approaches to college and university chaplaincy found in the United States in the twenty-first century. Drawing on a historical framework for the role of chaplaincy in the college setting from the middle of the twentieth century, when secularism became a heavier influence, and exploring the issues that confront the vocation in a pluralistic context of the twenty-first century, the course provides an overview of strategies needed to offer a creative, current, and engaging chaplaincy in higher education. Through a series of lectures, open discussions, site visits, short chaplaincy narratives, and guest speakers, the class encounters numerous perspectives and approaches to ministry in higher education. Area IV and Area V. 3 Course cr

REL 813a, Financing Churches and Nonprofits: A Case Study Approach  James Elrod
This six-week seminar examines some of the significant financial challenges faced by churches, schools, cultural institutions, and social services organizations today. Utilizing a case study-based curriculum, the course explores financial issues that help determine (or undermine) every nonprofit entity’s ability to realize its mission. Solutions that promote sustainability are emphasized. Topics include financial statement analysis, fundraising, metrics, financial transparency, budgeting, and crisis management. Area IV. 1½ Course cr

REL 825a, Music Skills and Vocal Development for Ministry  Awet Andemicael
This course is designed to help those training for lay and ordained ministry to improve their musical and vocal skills as part of the larger process of their transformation into living instruments of God. The course is comprised of three components: skill development, spiritual formation, and theological reflection. Area IV. 3 Course cr

REL 848a, Leadership Ministry in Schools  Jere Wells
This course seeks to prepare students of all denominations for leadership positions in schools. It begins with an analysis of where young people are today and, in particular, the existential/spiritual questions they are often asking, even without realizing they are asking them. Teaching about religion in secular schools—public and independent—is briefly considered. Then the course turns its attention to schools with some sort of religious orientation. After studying the heritage and tradition of such schools, students consider the issues involved in leading schools today. The roles of school head, chaplain (lay or ordained), the religion teacher, and the student are considered. Many aspects of school life are explored, including the pedagogical, pastoral, and liturgical. The difficulties and delights of educational ministry and leadership are identified and discussed. Naturally, issues of race, class, gender, and sexuality arise. Through required field trips, the course considers the particular problems and opportunities involved in inner-city schools and parish day schools. Area IV and Area V. 3 Course cr

REL 875b, Advanced Topics in Leadership Ministry in Schools and Colleges  Jere Wells
This seminar is designed to allow students to pursue, in depth, themes raised in the introductory courses. The course’s overall consideration is how an educational leader trained at YDS can effectively “minister” to students, colleagues, and other members of school communities. Readings and discussions cover a range of topics including the tradition of faith-based education, school mission, pedagogy, worship, service programs, and ethical leadership in the “business” of schools (admissions, budgets, fundraising). The seminar also makes extensive use of case studies and simulations. For the major research project, each student pursues a topic of particular interest
related to schools and educational leadership. Research includes direct experience, fieldwork/campus visits, and review of scholarship. Issues of race, class, gender, and sexuality arise in connection with topics considered in this seminar. Area IV and Area V. 3 Course cr

SPIRITUALITY AND MINISTRY

REL 805a, Awakening the Heart: Spiritual Practices for Healing and Wholeness Brita Gill-Austern
This course is an introduction to individual and communal Christian spiritual practices. A few practices from the Jewish and Buddhist traditions are introduced to help expand our understanding of Christian practices and to see the overlap with other religious spiritual practices. Spiritual practices are central to every religious tradition to cultivate and increase the love of God, one's neighbor, one's self, and all of creation. Love is more easily called forth when the heart is opened and attention is paid to the integration of mind, body, and spirit. Very gentle yoga begins each session as a way of embodying the importance of breath and attention to the body in spiritual practice. The mind is engaged by superb reading, large and small group discussions of reading, and lectures/presentations on the theme of awakening the heart through spiritual practices. The metaphor of “the heart” as it is understood biblically—meaning the intellect, emotions, and will—is woven through the class and associated with specific spiritual practices. We seek to awaken the spirit within us through practices inside and outside of class and inner work that facilitates self-knowledge and knowledge of God. The class provides both intellectual engagement and the experience of spiritual retreat. It meets on four Saturdays. Area IV. 3 Course cr

REL 809a, Loving Creation: Spirituality, Nature, and Ecological Conversion Janet Ruffing
This course focuses on the spiritual dimension of ecology. Spiritual thought and practice are enriched through being situated in the natural world, and scientifically based ecology is given added depth and meaning by extending the ecological field to include traditions of spiritual thought and practice. The spiritual tradition offers practices and a history of a quality of mind and heart that cultivates an awareness of the beauty and significance of the living world as well as its fragility and need for respectful care. In this course, we explore a contemplative ecology rooted in the ancient desert tradition primarily through the work of two thinkers: Douglas Burton-Christie's “Contemplative Ecology” and Denis Edwards's Trinitarian theology, which expands our sense of the ongoing involvement of God in creation and requires ecological conversion of all of us to repair the harm caused by the distorted utilitarian and individualistic ethic. Area IV. 3 Course cr

REL 840b, Contemporary Christian Spirituality Janet Ruffing
This course critically reflects on developments in Christian spirituality in the past fifty years: the vocations and role of laity, feminism, the development of the social teaching of the churches, the new cosmology, the rise of postmodernism, new understandings of spiritual practices, and multiculturalism. It provides a theoretical framework for developing one's own spirituality in the light of these and other developments and an understanding of practices that support spiritual growth. Topics include definitions of spirituality, asceticism, vocational choices and commitments (including lifestyle, ministry, and work), Christian discipleship, prayer/meditation, compassion and solidarity, sexuality and spirituality, and the effects of feminism. M.Div. students may choose to build this course into their formation plan. Area IV. 3 Course cr

REL 847b, Ignatius of Loyola and the Spiritual Exercises Janet Ruffing
This course on St. Ignatius and his Spiritual Exercises explores the life and times of Ignatius, the major influences on his spiritual life, and accounts of his personal experience that grounded his development of the Spiritual Exercises—a very powerful set of practices or “experiments” with various forms of prayer that enable a person to experience the Trinitarian God as a God desiring to offer each person abundant graces in the context of an intimate relationship with God in a life of service. The prayer processes focus on praying with texts from the scriptures related to the themes of the various movements in the Spiritual Exercises. Students learn a variety of reflective practices and make two four-week “retreats” based on Michael Hanson's The First Spiritual Exercises, a retrieval of Ignatius's work with people seeking to grow in their spiritual lives while continuing to be immersed in their normal daily activities. Area IV. 3 Course cr