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, theoretical 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. Within traditions, we explore problems of representation and diversity. 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 820a, Conflict Transformation: Pastoral Care with Congregations and Communities  Joyce Mercer
This is a course on the theory and practice of faith-based conflict transformation in congregations and communities, in response to the growing prevalence of destructive conflict in the churches and in the world. Students learn basic skills for engaging, analyzing, and transforming conflict as a critically important form of pastoral care with congregations and other communities. Using texts, case studies, role plays, and other resources, students compare and practice various models of defining and dealing with conflict in congregations; assess and work with differing personal styles and comfort levels in conflict situations; and consider theological understandings of conflict and its transformation. Area IV. Prerequisite: REL 807. 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/intersectional 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 in 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, as well as a range of administrative skills, including strategic planning, group dynamics, conflict resolution, personnel management, fundraising, 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 is limited to graduating M.Div. students. Area IV. 3 Course cr

REL 832b, Psychology of Religion  Joyce Mercer
Psychology and religion share an interest in understanding issues at the center of human existence. They do so from distinctive epistemological positions, each addressing questions about transcendence, desire, love, sexuality, meaning and purpose, relationships to others and to the sacred, and identity in their own particular languages and frames of meaning. This course works at the intersections of psychology and religion to consider, in both classical and contemporary sources, how several major figures/schools of thought within psychology understand and interpret religious phenomena in human lives. Topics within this inquiry include human development, the
unconscious, conversion, experiences of mystery/transcendence/awareness of the sacred, and the development of God-images. The
course operates as a seminar, with some lectures, films, etc., alongside the primary seminar mode of discussion based upon close readings
of primary and secondary sources in the literature of the psychology of religion. Area IV and Area V. 3 Course cr

REL 887b, Narrative Pastoral Care  Mary Clark Moschella
This course offers an in-depth study of narrative pastoral care, a postmodern practice that has roots in family systems and critical theory.
Narrative care focuses on the importance of people's stories, beliefs, and values, and the way they make meaning in their lives. This
practice challenges destructive dominant narratives, such as racist, sexist, and/or homophobic narratives. It also identifies life-giving
alternative stories—true stories, including biblical and theological stories, that help people re-author their lives. Students learn narrative
approaches to individual, couple, family, and collective (community) care. Area IV. 3 Course cr

PREACHING MINISTRY

REL 812a or b, Principles and Practices of Preaching  Staff
This is the introductory course in theologies and practices of preaching. Students explore a range of approaches to preaching, learn
skills for exegeting listening communities, develop a personal theology of preaching, and more. Attention is given to biblical exposition,
the appropriate use of experience, development of a homiletical imagination, the preacher's spirituality, and ways to engage all of the
preacher's gifts for communication. The course includes plenary instruction and preaching sections in which students prepare and deliver
sermons. This one-term course is taught twice each year. Area IV. 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 to explore 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 preaching on texts from Ephesians. Throughout, we consider how to make the
Gospel known through preaching practices that honor the sophisticated theology and rhetoric of Ephesians. Area IV. Prerequisite: one
master's-level homiletics course or permission of the instructor. 3 Course cr

REL 817a, Pauli Murray In and Out of the Pulpit  Donyelle McCray
This course offers an exploration of Pauli Murray's life and thought with focused attention on her poetry, letters, speeches, memoirs,
and sermons. We use these modes of discourse to explore her spirituality and allow her to springboard our reflections on the nature of
faith-inspired witness today. The coalescing dynamics of race, class, gender identity, and sexuality are central to our work. After gaining
a solid understanding of how her voice and activism evolved, we focus on some of the contemporary implications. Ultimately, the course
is an examination of preaching and identity. Area IV. Prerequisite: REL 812 or its equivalent. An introductory course in theology is
recommended. 3 Course cr

REL 830b, Radical Lives of Proclamation  Donyelle McCray
This course provides a window into the spiritual lives of six visionaries: Pauli Murray, Óscar Romero, Cho Wha Soon, William
Stringfellow, Malcolm X, and Howard Thurman. Considerable attention has been directed to their lives as social activists and teachers,
but this course focuses on their lives as preachers. The course examines each preacher's understanding of God, the human person, and
community, and examines the ways these factors fund spirituality and shape sermons. The course also gives significant attention to the
faith these visionaries lived, contrasting that with the faith they articulated publicly. Ultimately, these visionaries are used as models, and
authentic ways are found to embrace their legacies in our own preaching. Area IV. Prerequisite: REL 503, REL 504, REL 505, REL 506, or
the equivalent. 3 Course cr

REL 831a, Is It a Sermon?  Donyelle McCray
Divine action in the world is proclaimed in numerous ways: in music, visual art, literature, testimony, and performance, for example.
When might such forms of expression constitute preaching? What are the boundaries of the sermon genre? How might preachers and
other proclaimers learn from one another? The aim of this course is to explore the limits of the sermon genre and use the insights gained
to enhance the preaching task. Together, we trouble the neat lines that separate preaching from other ways of witnessing to the faith. We
regularly examine the relationship between proclamation and identity, relying heavily on African American traditions of proclamation and
resistance. Ultimately the course seeks to foster vibrant preaching and intellectual curiosity. Area IV. Prerequisite: REL 812 or equivalent. 3
Course cr

REL 840a, Envisioning Shalom: Preaching for Creation  Carolyn Sharp
In this course, we consider ways to bear witness to the inherent value of Earth as a living and interconnected community that teaches us
profound theological and ethical truths. In discussions and preaching structured around mutual witness and deep listening, we explore
such issues as: ways in which Scripture passages testify to the intricate glories and stark vulnerabilities of creation as a site of God's
transforming work; the beauty, giftedness, intelligence, and relational sophistication of nonhuman creatures; human sin as a major
vector for harms that cause untold suffering in creation; grace as the divine intention not just for humanity but for all living beings,
Earth, and the cosmos. Engaging contemporary homiletical theory and studying sermons from expert preachers, students develop their
homiletical skills and capacity to imagine, honor, and advocate for the whole community of Earth and its flourishing. Together we listen
for the Gospel in sermons focused on creation; explore the potential of micro-homilies to build the capacity of faith communities for
ecological reflection and creation care; and attend to poetry and memoir writing as sources of wisdom. Area IV. Prerequisite: one master’s-level homiletics course or permission of the instructor.  3 Course cr

REL 862b, 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 precarity; creaturely 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 sermons that explore homiletical approaches to texts drawn from the Hebrew Scriptures and the Gospels. Area IV. Prerequisite: one master’s-level homiletics course or permission of the instructor.  3 Course cr

EDUCATIONAL MINISTRY

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 808b, Black Religion and Radical Education  Almeda Wright
Can religion and education support black liberation and freedom struggles? Have they always done so? In this course, we carefully interrogate the historical connections between religion (primarily Christianity), education, and struggles for freedom within African American communities and what I have come to describe as radical black religious education during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Students explore the ways that scholars have theorized about the radical or progressive dimensions of African American religion, as well as the different definitions and visions of social flourishing at various points throughout the twentieth century. At times, we challenge what has been included in the religious educational tradition of African Americans and what is considered radical. In part, this includes reframing dominant understandings of the contributions of great educators and intellectuals, underscoring the tension between valuing the work of black male intellectuals while recognizing the ongoing silencing and obscuring of black women's social and intellectual work. The course begins with an emphasis on early black religious educators and missionaries, like Daniel Alexander Payne and Amanda Smith, whose work in the nineteenth century set the stage for the evolution of radical religious education in the twentieth. It continues by focusing on the work of scholars such as Anna Julia Cooper, W.E.B. Du Bois, Ida B. Wells, Nannie Helen Burroughs, and Carter G. Woodson, as well as the mid-twentieth century religiously inspired social activism and the education that undergirded much of the civil rights movement. The course concludes by investigating the corresponding changes in black churches and religious academies that resulted from articulations of black power and black freedom and by acknowledging the ongoing significance of questions regarding the interconnection of race, religion, and radical education in contemporary social change movements. Area IV.  3 Course cr

REL 811b, 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, Financially Sustainable Churches and Nonprofits  James Elrod
This six-week seminar examines some of the significant financial challenges faced by churches, schools, cultural institutions, and social services organizations. Utilizing a case study-based curriculum, we explore financial issues that help determine (or undermine) any nonprofit entity’s ability to realize its mission. Solutions that promote sustainability are emphasized. Topics include management’s agency in the creation of financial information, financial statement analysis, capital structure, financial planning, budgeting, fundraising, and financial sustainability. Area IV.  1½ Course cr

REL 821b, Ministry with Youth  Almeda Wright
This course explores theories, perspectives, and approaches to educational ministry with youth. Students look closely at the context and world of youth and explore texts and media that take seriously the voices, dreams, questions, and struggles of adolescents. The class also looks closely at the role of religion and faith in the lives of adolescents — in particular, the role of Christian education and youth workers in the lives of young people. While acknowledging that there are myriad approaches to ministry and education with youth, in this course students wrestle with the question of what “must” be included, covered, or emphasized in good youth ministry. 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 835a, Meditation: East and West  Janet Ruffing
This seminar, just as easily named “Christian Contemplative Practice,” explores in a practical and theoretical manner the Christian tradition's rich heritage of prayer complemented by selected meditation practices from Eastern religions. Also included is a unit on Buddhism within its own worldview. Students must be willing to engage in the practice element of the course. Students must also be willing to experiment with practices from other religious traditions: Zen sitting, chanting, ecstatic dancing; embodied practices working with breath, movement, or postures; as well as Christian prayer and meditative practices. Area IV. 3 Course cr

REL 837a, Discernment of Spirits through Selected Mystics  Janet Ruffing
This course explores the Western Christian tradition of discernment of spirits through reading key historical texts. It includes an overview of the Scriptural texts on discernment and primarily focuses on texts from the fourteenth century through the sixteenth century. The figures studied are the anonymous writer of The Cloud of Unknowing, Catherine of Siena, Ignatius of Loyola, Teresa of Avila, and Jonathan Edwards. Area III and Area IV. 3 Course cr

REL 838a, Meditation: East and West  Janet Ruffing
This course explores John of the Cross's mystical teaching on the dark nights and the development of contemplative prayer, including mystical transformation or divinization through the process of prayer and life experiences. This entails a close reading of the Spiritual Canticle, the Canticle of Love, the Ascent of Mount Carmel, and the Dark Night. Students not only interpret these texts within the sixteenth-century framework of John of the Cross but also consider key contemporary applications of this teaching in relationship to what some are interpreting as social experiences of dark night and impasse, and the way personal and social pain in our lives contributes to our interior transformation through participation in God. Area IV and Area III. 3 Course cr

REL 838b, John of the Cross: A Guide for Difficult Times  Janet Ruffing
This course explores the experience of contemporary spiritual direction from the standpoint of both the director and the one directed. It situates the contemporary ministry of spiritual direction within the history of the Christian tradition and explores the theology, focus, process, and current models of spiritual direction. Spiritual direction has long been considered a charismatic gift of the Spirit. The course promotes reflection on the student's prior experience of spiritual direction as a way of making explicit the model(s) of spiritual direction one may have experienced and their effect on spiritual growth. This course does not qualify a student to offer spiritual direction, but it will facilitate discernment about whether seeking further cultivation/refinement of a charism (a practicum) in spiritual direction is indicated. In addition to studying the history and models of spiritual direction, the course gives considerable attention to the importance and meaning-making aspects of the narrative process inherent in spiritual direction. It also explores a theology of religious experience, including the key theological themes of sin, conversion, and discipleship of Jesus that are central to this process for Christians. Additionally, students consider how spiritual direction supports the development of prayer as well as briefly treat discernment of spirits and the qualities and competencies desired in a spiritual director/guide/companion. Finally, the course gives attention to how the societal and environmental context of a directee's life situation can be explored so that spiritual direction supports action toward social justice as it emerges from the directee's own experience. Area IV. 3 Course cr