

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.

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; and 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. Within traditions, we explore problems of representation and diversity. Between religious traditions, we examine white Christian privilege in America and sources of religious discrimination and conflict. 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 818a, Caring for Justice and Joy Mary Moschella

This seminar explores justice and joy in the ministry and in life. The readings examine the narratives of notable figures involved in diverse kinds of religious or humanitarian leadership—including pastoral, spiritual, and educational leadership—and in fields such as medical and community-based care or legal antiracist reform. The class explores the joyful practices of compassion, connection, freedom, and justice in the context of diverse religious vocations and situations. Students cultivate perspectives that are deep enough to hold human suffering and spacious enough to recognize divine goodness and love. The class practices narrative conversations as a means of challenging injustice and supporting human flourishing at personal, communal, and societal levels. Area IV. 3 Course cr

REL 820b, 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 the influence of religious values upon society. What ought to be our social responsibilities, particularly to those who are most vulnerable and in need of support, is a contested issue. The COVID-19 pandemic intensively and sharply reveals the public health crisis before us as well as some of the social and systemic inequities that structure our society and how those inequities impact the lives of people. This course has as its focus the effort to theologically reflect on, and discern from, an interdisciplinary approach to defining “the disinherited.” Students explore aspects of the Christian dimensions of social and political reform movements; the contours of faith-based social services; the influence of religious values on individual behavior; and ideas about the role of the church and government in meeting human needs. Through the interests and research of students, the course addresses 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. In that setting, students contextualize a theological understanding of the disinherited and what might constitute a ministry that addresses the needs of these groups. The learning journey of the course intentionally engages students on three overlapping themes or levels: theological frameworks, personal identity/sense of vocation, and practical tools one uses in living out one’s ministry and/or sense of self in the world. Area IV and Area II. 3 Course cr

REL 833a, Research Methods in Practical Theology Mary Moschella

Qualitative research methods provide a way to study theology-in-practice, faith on the ground. What is actually happening when people practice their faith? How do race, culture, and social capital figure into gatherings and ministries? How can researchers

interpret a religious tradition that they also inhabit? Students learn answers to these and other questions while conducting their own research projects throughout the term. As their research progresses and students consult with the class, a research community forms. Ethnography, congregational studies, and participatory action research are among the key approaches covered. Topics include the art and ethics of research design, relationships with participants, reflexivity, analysis, representation, writing, and more. Area IV. 3 Course cr

REL 856b, Pastoral Wisdom inside Prison: Fiction, Memoir, and Drama Mary Moschella

This course explores pastoral themes and insights that emerge through reading particular works of fiction, memoir, poetry, and drama, and the practice of “writing back” to them. It is taught 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 prompted by this literature. Writing for the development of voice is emphasized. Area IV. Prerequisite: interview with and permission of the instructor. 3 Course cr

PREACHING MINISTRY

REL 812a or b, Principles and Practices of Preaching Donyelle McCray

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 819b, 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 dramatic conflicts and resolutions emplotted in those books. The formation of believers in wisdom is a foundational concern of Ecclesiastes and Proverbs, which trace knowledge of the Lord and its antitheses in ways that fascinate many in contemporary communities of faith. Job and Lamentations wrestle with issues of suffering and justice in compelling poetry that can be explored powerfully from the pulpit. For 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. 3 Course cr

REL 830b, Radical Lives of Proclamation Donyelle McCray

This course provides a window into the spiritual lives of six visionaries: Thea Bowman, Óscar Romero, Yuri Kochiyama, Richard Twiss, Fred Ho, and Bayard Rustin. Considerable attention has been directed to their lives as social activists and teachers, but this course focuses on their lives as preachers and/or public witnesses. The course examines each person’s understanding of the divine, the human person, and community, and contrasts each individual’s public and private spirituality. Ultimately, these visionaries provide approaches to responding to demanding historical moments through sermons, speeches, artwork, and activism. Area IV. Prerequisite: REL 503, REL 504, REL 505, REL 506, or the equivalent. 3 Course cr

REL 865b, Preaching on the Gospel of Luke Carolyn Sharp

Since the earliest decades of the Christian movement, the stirring Gospel of Luke has been cherished as an authoritative witness to the purposes of God revealed in the birth, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. Luke offers much of value for the preacher: narratives and poems that frame the Incarnation within God’s deliverance of the marginalized in the covenantal history of Israel; storytelling that underscores the power of the Messiah over imperial oppressors and spiritual forces of harm; ironic reversals that dismantle hearers’ assumptions about social and economic status; and a robust view of the disciples’ ongoing formation for proclamation and mission. We read rich exegetical and literary studies of Luke by New Testament scholars, and we learn from expert preachers who bring fresh angles from homiletical theory to their engagements with Luke. Students design and preach sermons and micro-homilies that explore the power of the Gospel of Luke for Christian communities of conviction. Area IV. Prerequisite: one term of biblical studies at the master’s level. 3 Course cr

EDUCATIONAL MINISTRY

REL 801a or b, Marquand Chapel Choir Alfred Gumbs

1 credit per term.

REL 802a or b, Marquand Gospel and Inspirational 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, such as 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 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 815a, Radical Pedagogy Almeda Wright

This course studies and employs radical pedagogy as a lens through which to explore the intersections of religious education and community transformation. In essence, the class explores the ways that education, particularly religious education, is powerful, political, transformative, and even radical. This course also pushes students to address questions about the goals of education. Many proponents of radical pedagogy embrace ideals of radical equality or democracy. To explore these issues, the class wrestles with contemporary questions about educational reform in public schools and considers what role religious education can play in addressing social justice concerns within communities. The foundational theorists and conversation partners in the course include public and religious educators, critical theorists, and community organizers. While this course directly draws upon experiences as persons of faith and experiences within religious communities, the cases and readings draw heavily on what might be called “secular” theorists and educators who focus on public educational arenas. Area IV. 3 Course cr

REL 828b, Theory and Practice of Faith Development Almeda Wright

Can we develop faith? Does faith grow and mature in the same ways that we develop biologically and psychosocially as we age? How do we define faith? In this seminar, we explore these questions through the seminal work and conversation started by James W. Fowler. In the 1980s, Fowler wrote *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning*. This work offers a stage-based theory of faith development, which builds upon the stage theories of Erik Erikson, Jean Piaget, Lawrence Kohlberg, and others. In addition to exploring Fowler's work, we explore the work of others who have been in conversation with Fowler. These conversation partners have challenged some of his starting assumptions; have helped us to reflect more on the ways that gender, race, and power interplay with faith development; and have carried on the conversation of how faith develops in individuals, communities, and public life. Area IV. 3 Course cr

REL 848a, Leadership Ministry in Schools Jere Wells

This course prepares 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 often ask, 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 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 868b, Spirituality and Disability Staff

Spirituality is described as a commitment to living one's values, conscious life integration and transformation, the response of love and service for the “common good,” and the quest for meaning. This seminar examines the intersection of spirituality and disability and how

both offer a lens for exploring essential aspects of human existence, the sacred, and social engagement. It links theological, practical, and pastoral issues related to diverse experiences of spirituality and disability in the church and society. Pervasive forms of ableism are juxtaposed with the practice of radical hospitality as a prism for contemplating “life in the Spirit,” the universal body of Christ, and inclusion of persons missing from congregational life. The framework includes critical discourse of classic Christian spiritual traditions and historical and contemporary constructs of disability. It considers the spiritual autobiography and marginalization of fifteenth-century mystic Teresa de Cartagena, a female author of Jewish origin who was deaf, in addition to memoirs, films, and ethnographic research. Students are invited to immerse themselves in meaningful reflection on connectedness and its integral relationship to spiritual praxes of justice and compassion in the world. Area IV. 3 Course cr