BIBLICAL FIELD

BL514-DL Seminar in Psalms
Bechtel
An exegetical study of selected psalms in the context of both the Old Testament and the larger canon of Scripture. Attention is also given to the role of the psalms in the liturgical, devotional, and theological life of the church. 1.5 cr

BL516-IR The Days of Elijah and Elisha
West
We will take a deep dive into the Elijah and Elisha cycles in I & II Kings and will consider them in the light of the larger historical context of the Israelite monarchy into which these early prophets enacted, embodied, and articulated the Word of the Lord. The course will explore the artistry, drama, and theology of Israelite storytelling generally but with focused attention on these prophetic narratives. We will consider the cultural, historical, and theological context out of which these dramatic stories arose and will discover their transforming power through performance. 3 cr

BL505-DL Set Afire or Set Free?
Ecological Hermeneutics
Brogan
This course explores the field of ecological hermeneutics and the application of ecological interpretive approaches in ministry settings. Biblical scholars interpret the Bible’s teachings concerning the relationship between humans and creation in a variety of ways. Different interpretive approaches result in different applications. Students will be challenged to develop their own ecological hermeneutical approach to Scripture and to seek ways to apply their interpretations in their own ministry and life settings. 3 cr

BL521-DL Ruth and Esther
Bechtel
This course offers a literary and theological exposition of Ruth and Esther—two small books that offer large insights for today. Emphasis is on becoming more careful and responsible readers of Scripture. This course offers examples of how to engage an Old Testament book via in-depth exegesis, using a variety of critical tools. 3 cr

BL525-DL The Art of the Sabbath
West
In this course we will explore the biblical and theological context of the Sabbath and its historical development throughout the Old and New Testaments as well as in Jewish and Christian practice up until today, with a view toward how Sabbath practice can inform and shape Christian living and ministry. Topics will include Sabbath time, Sabbath practices and spiritual formation, Sabbath-keeping and Christian identity, the social, economic, and ecological dimensions of the Sabbath, Sabbath and Sunday, and more. 3 cr

BL532-DL The Gospel According to John
Brownson
Considers important historical, literary, hermeneutical, and theological issues in the Gospel of John, with exegesis of selected passages in Greek. Prereq: BL100, BL101A&B, BL102 or equiv. 3 cr

BL618-IR Advanced Hebrew
West, Bush
Advanced interactive learning in the language and theology of the Old Testament. Students develop a deeper understanding of grammar, syntax, translation and interpretation through hearing, speaking, and reading Hebrew, as well as memorization and enactment of scripture. This course is held off-site as a 10 ½ day overnight retreat experience. Pre-work includes grammar review, translation and creative exegetical project. Post-work involves a dramatic analysis paper. Prereq: BL110 & BL111 3 cr

CHRISTIAN MINISTRY FIELD

MN503 Global Leadership Summit
Smoll
This course is in partnership with the Willow Creek Global Leadership Summit (GLS). The purpose of this course is to appreciatively and critically engage The Global Leadership Summit, seeking to explore, question, and develop the skills, practices, and habits for leading Christian communities. Participants work online July 8-Aug 17 and attend the GLS at Community Reformed Church in Zeeland (or a location near you) from Aug 8-9, 2019. Attendance is required. The West Michigan group will meet in person the evenings of Aug 7 & 9 in addition to the conference. Those outside West Michigan will meet virtually. Tuition covers entrance to the GLS. 3 cr

MN520-DL Discipleship and Contemporary Christianity
Johnson
Within contemporary Christianity, we hear a lot of conversation around what it means to be a disciple and how to encourage the formation of faithful disciples. To help us engage these important questions, we will map out and explore prominent conceptions of discipleship evident in American Christianity today. 3 cr
MN524-DL Faith, Forgiveness, and Healing  
*Castillo Portugal*
In this course, students study the theory and methods relevant to integrating health and wellness, forgiveness and reconciliation into the life of the Christian public leader, the congregation, and the larger community. Physical, emotional, social, intellectual, vocational, and spiritual issues related to forgiveness and healing are explored. Special attention is given to how biblical, theological, and pastoral perspectives on forgiveness and healing inform the task of interpreting and confessing the gospel in situations of conflict and suffering. 1.5 cr

MN526 Ministering to the Toughest People to Love  
*DeGroat*
The church is not immune to trauma, abuse, narcissism, conflict, and addictions of all kinds. Ministering to the so-called “difficult” people can be exhausting, confusing, and lead to burnout or an early exit from ministry. This course will explore stories and symptoms commonly seen across a range of ecclesial traditions. We will explore a theology that views every human, even difficult people, as image-bearers, yet elaborate on troubling relational and systemic dynamics of sin that lead to chaos and confusion in the church. We will discuss what pastors need to do for their own self-care, trauma resilience, and continued resourcing beyond their seminary education. 3 cr

MN549-IR Preaching in the Dark  
*Brown*
We will consider a range of ways of thinking about the relationship between the gospel and our culture(s) and will practice ways of faithful and fruitful preaching from the Word on the cultural issues confronting the church in the early part of the 21st century. Special attention will be paid the growing number of “Millennials” who self-identify as “Nones”—whatever they believe and however they practice it, the local church is not necessary to them. 3 cr

MN550-DL Keeping and Talking the Word  
*Brown*
A course designed to provide each person with the time and space to explore and exercise certain primal spiritual disciplines of the people of God, namely Scripture contemplation/memorization/interiorization, spiritual reading, silence and mutual encouragement and pastoral performance. In alternating rhythms of the same, we will listen carefully to the witness of faithful brothers and sisters who have gone before us and to one another, as well, in an attempt to ready ourselves for “a long obedience in the same direction.” 3 cr

MN553-IR Church’s Common Chord: Music in Worship  
*Rienstra*
This course—designed for non-musicians and musicians alike—will explore the place of music in worship, carefully considering its theological, liturgical, and pastoral functions. Students will have the opportunity to consider music from an ever-increasing variety of sources—classical hymnody, gospel and revival songs, indie folk, Catholic liturgical renewal, contemporary praise and worship, and songs from sisters and brothers around the globe. 3 cr

MN556 Psychology and Christian Spirituality  
*DeGroat*
This course explores the developmental spirituality and psychology of a great 16th century theologian and mystic, St. Teresa of Avila, an influential female church reformer in a politically and ecclesially complex 16th century Spain. Along with her student and friend, St. John of the Cross, she explored human maturation and growth in a staged manner, from exile and exclusion to intimacy and union with Christ. Her stages of maturation mirror aspects of contemporary developmental psychology while anchoring them in a journey of union with God. Her prescient theology offers treasure to the 21st century church starved for a meaningful spirituality and an experiential pathway to union with God. 3 cr

MN570-DL Worldview and Lifeview  
*Brouwer*
We will read two significant recent reflections on culture and Christianity, discuss the implications of what they put forward, identify the implications for Christian formation, and express the outcomes for pastoral leadership. 3 cr

MN574-DL Foundations of Youth Ministry  
*Conner*
This course provides the foundational concepts and best practices to prepare the student for ministry to adolescents in both a church and non-church settings. The course will provide a basic understanding of adolescent development, contemporary culture, and incarnational witness. The course is designed to help the student to think and respond theologically to the needs and expectations of adolescents and provides practical tools enabling the student to design a theologically sound youth ministry program suitable in any context. 3 cr

MN583-DL We All Worship: Disability and Worship  
*Rozema*
Many people with disabilities have spiritual needs that are not being met and gifts that are not being exercised in the context of congregational worship. This course explores worship as the focal point of our shared Christian identity, the power center of our myriad gifts for building up the body of Christ, and the launching pad for our multifaceted witness in the world. 3 cr

MN588 Summer Institute on Theology and Disability  
*(Travel Seminar for GCDM)*  
*Conner*
The vision of the Summer Institute on Theology and Disability is to expand the depth and breadth of theological inquiry and resources that address and include the gifts, needs, and contributions of people with disabilities and their families to theological learning and religious practice. Attend this unique week-long gathering of theologians, academics, ministry leaders, people with disabilities, and others to explore the intersection of faith and disability. 2019 & 2020 location is Holland, MI. Event has included faculty such as Stanley Hauerwas, Hans Reinders, John Swinton, Amos Yong, Candida Moss, and Erik Carter. 3 cr
THEOLOGY FIELD

TH518 Eschatology: Christian Hope and Last Things
*McDonal*

Eschatology (study of the “last things”) concerns Christian hope for the future consummation of all of God’s promises and purposes and what this means for Christian living today. Drawing on biblical scholars and theologians past and present, as well as art, music, and literature, this course will explore scriptural-founded contours for thinking wisely about the “last things,” and help us to recognize the impact of our eschatological views on our discipleship now. 3 cr

TH532-IR Augustine of Hippo: His Life and Thought
*Kantzer-Komline*

Western philosophy, so the saying goes, consists of footnotes to Plato. Augustine has impacted western theology in a similarly profound way. In this course, students will engage this North African Christian living on the margins of the crumbling Roman Empire in his own words, reading both classics, like the Confessions, and lesser-known texts stemming from Augustine’s pastoral ministry, such as sermons and letters he wrote to colleagues, parishioners, and other inquisitive citizens of his late ancient world. 3 cr

TH543-DL The Reformed Tradition in America
*Komline*

Explore how the thoughts, words, and deeds of Americans in the Reformed tradition have shaped our lives together as members of congregations, denominations, and larger ecclesial communities. Although we will pay special attention to the Dutch Reformed tradition, we will also look at groups such as Presbyterians and Congregationalists, always alert to the contributions of previously overlooked people and groups. This course prepares students for denominational ordination exams, as well as for serving their congregations and denominations as historically informed and self-aware Christians. 3 cr

TH546-DL War, Peace, and Peace-Making
*Stubbs*

“Peace” is a central goal of God’s plan for all of creation, and yet throughout the history of the Church, there has been much disagreement concerning how best to understand the full witness of scripture regarding war and peace, how to integrate scripture’s vision of peace with justice, and what the implications of this vision are for Christian discipleship and practice. In this course those questions of war, peace, and peacemaking are explored in three movements: (1) Biblical/Theological Foundations (2) Peacemaking within and outside the Church, and (3) Restorative justice. 1.5 cr

TH561-DL History of the Black Church
*Johnson*

Galatians 3:28 beautifully asserts “there is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ.” Even so, early in the history of the United States, African Americans found it necessary to establish the Black Church. This course examines the events and conditions necessitating that development and how the legacies of slavery, Jim Crow segregation, and persistent racism impacted the theology and worship of the Black Church. Also explored is the extent to which those related issues still prevent achieving full unity in the body of Christ and the strategies that can be employed to finally achieve the Lord’s vision. 3 cr

TH565-DL Disability & Theology in Christian Tradition
*Barton*

What is disability? How has disability been understood theologically in the Christian tradition? This course examines theologies of disability with the aim of helping students to comprehend and articulate their own working theology of disability. 3 cr

TH590-DL Reading the Bible with the Dead: Retrieving Pre-modern Biblical Interpretation
*Billings*

This course explores the way in which reading the Bible in the company of pre-modern interpreters can benefit the life and ministry of the church today. After considering the basic features of a pre-modern approach to scripture, the course will focus upon challenging biblical texts (e.g., Hagar, Psalms of cursing, etc.), exploring the new insights that patristic, medieval, and Reformation-era interpreters can bring in helping us proclaiming scripture as God’s word. 1.5 cr

TH595-DL Post-Colonial Realities of the Hispanic American Experience
*Flores*

This reading seminar introduces students to postcolonial theology and the religious contexts of Hispanics living in the United States. We will discuss ways in which these communities appropriate Christian, Indigenous, and Afro-Caribbean religions in structured acts of piety and popular religion. Class readings and local site visits will examine Hispanic religious and spiritual practices as shaped by colonialism, race/ethnicity, class, gender, and migration. We will take seriously the missiological question posed by Brian McLaren as it may relate to Hispanic evangelism and ministry. “Is an imperial or dominating mindset inherent to Christian faith, for better or worse—or can there be a new and different kind of Christianity?” 3 cr

TH632-DL Introduction to the World’s Religions
*Thompson*

An introduction to the beliefs and practices of the major religions of the world, with a study of their scriptural traditions. New religious movements such as Baha’i, The Unification Church, and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (“Mormons”) are also treated, paying special attention to their relationship to Christianity. The Christian theological response to other religions is also considered. 3 cr

-DL = Distance Learning course  
-IR = In-Residence course

Learn more about the elective courses and the faculty teaching them at Western Theological Seminary’s Online Electives Catalog located in CANVAS:

https://westernsem.instructure.com/courses/2530133