

WTS 2020-21 Elective Courses

BIBLICAL FIELD

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-IR

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

BL526-DL

Psalms and Wisdom Literature

Bechtel

An exegetical study of selected psalms in the context of both the Old Testament and the larger canon of Scripture. Attention is given to the role of the psalms in the liturgical, devotional, and theological life of the church. The Wisdom Literature of the Bible explores the forms, vocabulary, and concepts of wisdom in the Bible, emphasizing Proverbs, Job, Song of Solomon, and Ecclesiastes. 3 cr

BL535-DL

Interpreting the Parables

Brownson

A survey of recent approaches to interpreting the parables of Jesus provides the context for considering

hermeneutical issues in preaching and teaching the parables. 3 cr

MN577-DL

Imagining a New Future: Biographies of Resistance and Hope

Bruce

Enjoying the biographies of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Dorothy Day, and Fannie Lou Hamer, we will delve into the lives of ordinary Christians living in extraordinary times, women and men who peered through a bleak reality and imagined God's New Day.

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

MN506-IR

By Christ, Washed and Well Fed

Rozeboom

Word and Sacrament are gifts by which Christ himself gives us life—his life. With these gifts, Christ refreshes and sustains us in that life, communally and personally. This course will be a robust theological, pastoral, missional and liturgical exploration of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. We'll listen for the Spirit to discover how we—each according to our calling and context—might set forth the gifts of God for the people of God faithfully and well. 3 cr

MN508-IR

Writing/Reading for the Pastoral Life

DeGroat

Ecclesiastes 12 says there is no end to the making of many books, and in the pastoral life there is no end to the writing and saying of many words. Words have enormous power—after all, it was with words that God spoke his creation into being. This course helps students choose and use words with care and thoughtfulness. We will work toward becoming better writers (and readers), and in the process become better preachers, teachers and pastors. 1.5 cr

MN517-DL

Faithful and Effective Response to Domestic Violence

Castillo Portugal

Explores the theories, resources, and strategies of pastoral and congregational care to respond faithfully and effectively to the issue of domestic violence based on theological understandings of God and human experience. This course draws upon the insights of psychology, sociology, and theology to guide pastoral and congregational care into a more faithful and effective praxis. The course draws from scriptural, theological, socio-scientific, and experiential resources and invites students to engage those resources in ways that enhance their ability to offer care and to lead communities of care in response to the issue of domestic violence. 3 cr

MN534-DL

Preaching as Pastoral Care

Brown

This course is designed to provide the opportunity to think deeply, practically, and with complexity about the mysterious relationship between preaching and pastoral care. In this course, we'll lean on the wisdom of preacher/pastor Eugene Peterson. In his book, *Five Smooth Stones of Pastoral Work*, he says, "Pastoral work begins at Pulpit, the Font, the Table; it continues in the hospital room, the family room, the counseling room, the committee room.

The pastor who leads people in worship is companion to those same people between acts of worship." 3 cr

MN555-DL

Presbyterian Confessions/Polity *Stubbs*

Study of the Confessions and Book of Order of the PC(USA) is intended to give students good knowledge of the confessional tradition, directory of worship and form of government of the PC(USA). This course will help students to prepare for ordination exams. 1.5 cr

MN558-DL

Worship Renewal in a Changing World *Rienstra*

The renewal of God's people—in scripture and in the church's history—nearly always begins with a renewal of its worship. This course looks at some of the principles and practices that God, by the power of the Holy Spirit, is using to accomplish worship renewal in the body of Christ in our fast-changing world. Reading, discussion, and exercises will be guided by core convictions articulated by the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship (CICW). We will be especially attentive to this fraught cultural moment colored by the pandemic and an increasing awareness of racism in our country. Key learning will take place at the renowned CICW Symposium for Worship, which will be entirely online with panels, podcasts, livestream worship, webinars, etc offered throughout the month of January 2021. We will "attend" and process this event together, but because the events go to January 26, students should plan on work for this course extending into the first week of the Spring semester. 3 cr

MN562-DL

Liturgical Shenanigans: Ritual Theory and Christian Formation *Rienstra*

Rituals are enacted everyday by humans in all cultures—at theaters and stadiums, libraries and marketplaces, bathrooms and fire pits, as well as places of worship. They are one of the most important ways we both express and shape our understanding of the meaning of life. The course will have three primary learning modes: 1) we will observe ritual activity in culture (our own

and others') that either fits or fights the gospel; 2) we will engage readings at the intersection of cultural anthropology and practical theology; and 3) we'll experiment with liturgical shenanigans—attending to the work of the Spirit in and through our holy play in the neighborhood of symbol, performance, embodiment, and transcendence. 1.5 cr

MN580-DL

Healing Ministry of the Church *Thompson*

What is healing? What does it mean to be healthy? What does Jesus' life and ministry model for us about how God defines health and offers healing? How does one's definition of health and healing influence one's understanding of faithful ministry on the whole? Through dialogue around questions like these, students will be invited to: (1) gain an overview of how the Church has historically understood what it means to heal and be healed; (2) critically engage existing understandings of health and healing alongside a close reading of key biblical texts (with particular attention paid to the healing ministry of Jesus); and (3) construct their own practically actionable theology of healing. 3 cr

MN581-DL

Ministry & Margins: Amplifying Our Witness *Conner*

Explores the boundary-crossing ministry of Jesus, in particular how he redefined the margin and the center with a Kingdom perspective. The class will consider ways in which ministry to and with those who are often marginalized in our society can amplify the witness of our congregations. People groups that are underserved include, but are not limited to, the elderly or homebound, people suffering from dementia, people in group homes, people struggling with literacy, people with disabilities, people living in poverty, immigrant communities, and people without homes. 3 cr

MN582-DL

Ministry, Aging and Dementia *McDonald*

Aging presents us with both pastoral challenges and important gifts for individuals and the body of Christ.

How do we walk well with and learn from those who are in the final stage of their earthly journeys? One increasingly common aspect of aging that acutely challenges the faith, hope, and love of all of us is dementia. Together we will explore theological and pastoral resources for dealing faithfully with those who suffer from dementia, and those who care for them. 3 cr

MN588-DL

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. The 2021 location is Holland, MI. Event has included presenters such as Stanley Hauerwas, Hans Reinders, John Swinton, Amos Yong, and Candida Moss. Erik Carter, Bill Gaventa, and Ben Conner, who have taught in the Graduate Certificate in Disability and Ministry, are on the faculty of the SITD. 3 cr

MN614-IR

Discerning Congregations: Discovering God in the Neighborhood *Small*

The congregation is a sign, instrument, and foretaste of the Kingdom of God, even with its imperfections, divisions, and difficulties. Students will read in the areas of ecclesiology and mission and will learn the skills of applied ethnographic fieldwork. Students will then work in pairs to adopt a local congregation and engage in conversation discerning God's mission in local communities. Students can expect to understand how Christian leaders, pastors, and laity can form and lead congregations as participants in God's mission. 3 cr

THEOLOGY FIELD

TH505-IR

Creation Calling

McDonald

Creation is loved into being and sustained by the Triune God, who also has a glorious eschatological future for it. Human beings are called to keep it in ways that are consonant with God's purposes, but instead, creation calls out in protest at having to bear the consequences of our alienation from God. Through readings, film, guest speakers, and field trips, this course will help us to think with scriptural and theological wisdom about the doctrine of creation and 'creation care' issues, and will also help us to discover ways to act well towards the rest of creation in our various ministry settings. 1.5 cr

TH532-DL

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. 1.5 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/2881424>