Introduction to Practical Theology
Syllabus Summer 2019
LIM 703

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Office: online instructor
Phone: please email
Office Hours: by appointment, please email

Loyola University
Loyola Institute for Ministry
Location: Online
Dates: May 27th-July 29th

Important! You will be notified by email when your course web site is available (normally the week before class begins).

Please check your Loyola email account for instructions. To find your Loyola email address, go to the Loyola home page: www.loyno.edu. At the upper right section of the home page go to Quick Links > Find People. Enter your first and last name and select “student,” then hit return. You should see your email address. In the same of the home page, you may select “student email” to access your Loyola email. Additional help on email is available at: http://library.loyno.edu/blog/?tag=log-in. If you experience difficulties in finding your email address, please contact Diane Blair: dblair@loyno.edu

The course will be available to students the Wednesday before session one. Please reply to the instructor’s email when you receive it to confirm that you are ready to begin the course.

Course Description:

This course seeks to help participants develop a rhythm of disciplined reflection and action for the sake of the reign of God. The sociocultural, personal, and institutional contexts of one’s primary ministry praxis along with the Christian tradition form the matrices of practical theology. Communication skills, interpretation theory and social analysis are key components of the conversation in which faith and daily life meet and build.

Introduction to Practical Theology presents a methodological grounding for the entire Master of Pastoral Studies and Master of Religious Education programs at the Loyola Institute for Ministry. It describes key features of practical theology and then presents a model for understanding the contexts that shape our ministries. It also presents a method for reflecting critically on ministerial experiences and on the ideas and social forces that influence our spirituality and interpretations.
Key Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this course students will have developed:

- an initial understanding of practical theology;
- a working description of their ministry praxis;
- an appreciation of the dynamic, hermeneutical, critical and transformative character of practical theology;
- a method for engaging in practical theology;
- some first steps in practicing this method;
- communication skills that foster dialogue and enhance community; and
- a practice of prayer informed by Ignatian spirituality.

Required Texts

Fleischer, Barbara et al. *Introduction to Practical Theology*. New Orleans: Loyola Institute for Ministry, 2001. *(No purchasing required, the course book and individual chapters will be made available weekly through Blackboard).*


Recommended and optional articles may be found in the Course Resources section of the Blackboard site.

Recommended Texts (helpful, not required to purchase)


Assignments and Evaluation: (please see full descriptions on Blackboard)

- Participation in the Discussion Board (Weekly) 40%
• Spiritual Formation 5%
• Group Dynamics Assignment (Due at the end of Session Three) 5%
• Ministry Praxis (revised) Assignment (Due Session Four) 5%
• Personal Context Assignment (Due at the end of Session Five) 5%
• Sociocultural Testing Assignment (Due at the end of Session Six) 5%
• Final Reflective Essay* (Due at the end of Course, Session 10) 35%

*Graduate Students only

All students, those seeking graduate credit and those seeking continuing education units (CEU’s), must participate in all session activities. This includes the weekly discussion board, as well as the three short assignments (Spiritual Formation, Group Dynamics, and Personal Context) that are worth 5% each. Those seeking graduate credit must also complete Sociocultural Testing Assignment and the Final Reflective Essay detailed below.

Assignments and Evaluation

Participation in the Discussion Board (40% Graduate Students; 85% CEU Students). The sessions of this course include assignments for reading, audio segments, videos (where applicable) and discussion questions. These are provided in the Assignments section of the course web site. In addition to reading all the materials assigned and listening to assigned audio segments, all students will also be expected to participate in the class discussions by way of the Discussion Board. Students are asked to read all posts and respond substantively to at least two of your colleagues' postings (i.e., more than "I agree." or "I like your ideas." – We ask that you say why you might agree or disagree and include your own reflections on the discussion questions, readings, course materials, and experience). Ideally, each discussion "thread" of the course will become a conversation. Be sure to check responses to your own postings and respond to any questions that others may have posed for you. For each Discussion Board assignment, students are required to make three (3) posts: a major post of 200-400 words in which they respond to the question for the week, and two (2) minor posts of no more than 150-200 words each in which they respond to two (2) of the major posts made by their fellow students. Weekly sessions run from Tuesday-Tuesday

Contributions to Discussion Board should be the fruit of, and therefore demonstrate, a critical engagement with both the course readings. To achieve this, you are asked to note comments, questions, observations, reflections, insights that surface as the natural result of thoughtful reading. All students, those seeking graduate credit and those seeking
continuing education units (CEU's), must participate in all session activities, including reading or viewing the course materials and contributing to course discussions.

This course also offers a combination of the traditional asynchronous online course and synchronous webinars using Blackboard Collaborate. The majority of interaction will take place through threaded discussion, with a number of occasions for live webinars for all students over the course of the semester. (For details see the "Webinars" menu tab on Blackboard.) Several times throughout the course, you will be invited to enter into a video class discussion in lieu of the written discussion board postings. Note: participation in the whole class video discussions are optional.

**Spiritual Formation (5%)** Spiritual formation is an essential element of preparation for ministry. The LIM program attempts to integrate the spiritual growth of students into their theological education in a way that enriches their relationship with God and enlivens their ministry. The LIM experience and process, of its very nature, fosters the spiritual formation and development of the students. In the context of a learning community, it promotes critical reflection and facilitates the search for the answers to ultimate questions. At the same time, it cultivates a deepened relationship with others, with creation and ultimately with the divine. Students often remark on the transformative impact of the program as they relate their lives and their ministry to their studies. Students will be given two prayer exercises, most often two Scripture passages, but meditations from the Exercises will also be suggested, as well as other subject matter for prayer.

Students are encouraged to spend at least two prayer periods of twenty to thirty minutes in preparation for the weekly session, though some may want to spend more time. In addition to your ongoing prayer, a minimum of two journal entries are required on Blackboard.

**Suggested books on prayer:**
William Barry, *God and You*
Thomas Green, *Opening to God*
Mark Thibodeaux, *Armchair Mystic*
Timothy Gallagher, *Meditation and Contemplation*

**Ministry Praxis Concern Assignment: (5%)** Presenting your description and initial understanding of a concern related to your ministry praxis, or a concern that you feel called to address.

This short assignment, **due during Session Two**, is an initial step toward developing your final paper. This Session 2 assignment will not be graded, but it offers you the benefit of receiving feedback on your work from the instructor before submitting it for grading. We want your later assignments to get off to a good start! You will have an opportunity to
revise it and submit it for credit (5 points) in Session 4. This Session 4 assignment will be the backbone of your final paper and will constitute the first two sections of it (Detailed directions can be found on Blackboard).

**Group Dynamics Assignment: (5%)** Students are asked to watch a series of video segments and comment accordingly (Detailed instructions on Blackboard). **Due at the End of Session Three.**

**Revise Part A of your Session 2 “Concern” Assignment: (5%)** Presenting in writing your Description and Initial Understanding of Your Concern. **Due at the end of Session 4.** (Note: Part A only)

**Personal Context Assignment (5%)** Due at the end of Session Five (to be uploaded to Blackboard as an “assignment”):

- Please respond to the following in an essay of 500-750 words total:
  - Summarize your experience of asking for and receiving feedback from your colleague regarding your communication skills and goals (consult pages 80-84 of the Course Book; you may want to share those with the person providing you with feedback). Was there any feedback that surprised you, or confirmed the way that you see yourself?
  - After considering all of the material of this session, what do you see as your personal gifts in relating to others in your ministry praxis? What aspects of your personality or background do you think might make your effectiveness in ministry more challenging or difficult?

**Sociocultural Context Testing Assignment (5%, Graduate Students only):** Due at the end of Session Six

Students will type up a 1-2 page draft (double-spaced) of their sociocultural ministry context assignment for feedback. This assignment helps students practice “testing” or analyzing their initial assumptions (as contrasted with “telling” or describing) based on relevant data and course material. This draft will be revised and incorporated into the final reflective essay.

**Final Reflective Essay (35%, Graduate Students only):**

Using the reflection method and contextual model of practical theology presented in this course, reflect on your understanding of the concern you identified early in this course. The paper should present a critical reflection on your understanding the dynamics influencing this concern and of the Christian Tradition’s implications regarding this concern. Use the four-step process of reflection introduced in Session Four (pages 99-111) and the contexts of ministry introduced in Session One (pages 24-30) to guide and structure your reflective
essay. In the last part of your reflective essay, based on your research and reflections, develop a feasible and faithful strategy that you might engage in to address this concern. (Note that the action you take is not part of this assignment.) To help you, a more detailed description of the assignment is on Blackboard.

Graduate online writing assistance can be accessed here

Course Policy

Grading Scale

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Score Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93-100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83-86</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-82</td>
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<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79</td>
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<td>C</td>
<td>70-77</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>Below 70</td>
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Please note that the LIM grading scale uses B as the standard for graduate-quality work. A and B+ indicate graduate work done with distinction, with B- and below signifying levels below graduate standards.

Directions for Weekly Posting on Discussion Board

*Please note: All times are Central Time.*

For each Discussion Board assignment, students are required to make three (3) posts: a *major* post of 200-400 words in which they respond to the question posted, and two (2) *minor* posts of no more than 150-200 words each in which they respond to two (2) of the major posts made by their fellow students. In weeks where there are two discussion board questions, students are required to make one major post and two minor posts for each question (totaling 2 major, 4 minor posts). Our weekly sessions will run from Tuesday to Tuesday.

**Beginning Each Tuesday**

- Read the overview for the week’s work and begin individual work (“Read” and “Watch” assignments) for this session. Questions that arise about the material may be addressed to me in the Question Board or via email.
- Contributions to the Discussion Board should reflect critical engagement with both the required readings as well as any other assigned material and should demonstrate itself as such.
Before Thursday Midnight

- The first major post to the weekly discussion question is due by Thursday night for group leaders and by **Saturday** night for everyone else (Midnight Central). Some weeks require students to answer more than one question as a major post.
- Groups will be created and assigned by the second week. When this occurs, the Group Discussion Leader posts a response to Discussion Question by Thursday night. This initial post by the Group Discussion Leader should also raise a question for the group to consider, and be between 200-400 words (Major post).

**Before Saturday Midnight**

- Other members of the group respond to the weekly question by replying to the Discussion Leader’s thread before Saturday night, Midnight CDT, of which should be between 200-400 words (Major post).

**By Tuesday Noon**

- All students respond to **two** others member’s posts in 150-200 words by Monday night (Minor posts).
- All members should have a total of three discussion posts by Monday night (one Major, two Minor) for **each** discussion board question.

**Tuesday Noon**

- Read the Session announcement and begin reading and watching for the next week.

The following bullet points can each result in a half letter grade reduction. To **earn full credit, you should do the following things:**

- post and respond by the deadline;
- adhere to word requirements;
- refrain from inappropriate posts (words/tones that diminish the character and community of the course) Practice using “I-statements,” avoid generalizations by qualifying your words;
- provide content of substance based on the course material--that is, not comments such as “I agree wholeheartedly,” but rather content that offers an original and informed contribution to the discussion, either as an opening or as a response, and reference course material;
- integrate (reference/cite) what you have read, how you understand the material, your experience, the remarks of your colleagues, and the course material;
- posting fully addresses the weekly questions and stimulates substantial follow-up postings;
- write in accessible prose--that is, not necessarily formal academic prose, but prose that is as clear and correct as you can make it, citing material not your own, and
avoiding “text-speak” (using complete sentences rather than abbreviations and emoji to make your point, for example).

For a detailed explanation of the grading policy, please see the Discussion Board Rubric on Blackboard. I look forward to seeing your comments and insights in the discussion boards.

Absences: In this online course, your presence is determined by your active participation in the weekly threaded discussions. Lack of participation in these is considered an absence. Two or more weeks of cumulative absence and/or incomplete work on discussion board results in a failing grade in this graduate course or no credit for continuing education students. If you foresee a hindrance that would have an impact on your full weekly participation, please contact your instructor ahead of time. Excused absences with plans to make up missed work do not count toward a failing grade.

Course Outline and Readings (Tuesday-Tuesday)
Weekly Schedule

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Dates</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>May 28-June 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>June 4-June 11</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>June 11-June 18</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>June 18-June 25</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>June 25-July 2</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>July 2-July 9</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>July 9-July 16</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>July 16-July 23</td>
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Final Papers Due Monday, July 29th, Before Midnight CDT

Please see “Weekly Sessions” section in the online course itself for weekly readings and assessments.

Course Policy

Absences: In this online course, your presence is determined by your active participation in the weekly threaded discussions. Lack of participation in these is considered an absence. Two or more weeks of absence on discussion board results in a failing grade in this course. If you foresee a hindrance that would have an impact on your full weekly participation, please contact your instructor ahead of time. Excused absences with plans to make up missed work do not count toward a failing grade.

Late work: The weekly deadlines as well as the deadlines for longer writing assignments in this course are firm. This means that late work is not accepted and will be counted as zero. However, the instructor will accept and consider extension requests on all course work, if
the request is made before the deadline for the assignment passes. It is recommended to communicate with the instructor if additional time is needed, instead of letting deadlines pass.

**University Policy**

**Deadlines**

The last day to register for a course is **May 29th** and the deadline to drop a course is **May 31st 2019**. Students who have received financial aid this semester should not drop or withdraw from this class without first talking to Diane Blair or someone in the financial aid department. Dropping or withdrawing may require you to repay the financial aid you received from this class, including all federal and state aid, both grants and loans.

**Withdrawal Policy**

The last day to withdraw from a college course with a “W” grade is **July 12, 2019**. It is the responsibility of the student to complete and submit the necessary forms to the admissions and/or registrar’s office.

**Statement of Incomplete Grades:**

Grades of “I” (incomplete) change to “F” automatically if the course is not completed and the grade changed by the sixth week of the subsequent term, excluding summer terms.

**See Syllabus II on Blackboard for additional University Policies**