

# AREA IV: PRACTICAL THEOLOGY STUDIES

Practical theology involves the study and practice of lived religion, spiritual leadership and care. The field provides analytical tools, conceptual frameworks, and specific skills for the theologically grounded study of religious and spiritual practices of persons and communities. Area IV courses explore an array of epistemologies, research methodologies, affective processes, and lifeways that shape meaning-making via theological discourse, various therapeutic frameworks and healing modalities, preaching and public address, emancipatory pedagogy, and reflection on lived experience in communities of practice. The disciplines of practical theology engage embodied and reflexive understandings of identity, agency, power, and sociality as formative for the spiritual imagination and the lived religious practices of individuals, families, and communities of conviction.

## PASTORAL THEOLOGY AND CARE

### **REL 804a, Practical Theology Seminar** Joyce Mercer and Almeda Wright

This seminar offers an orientation to the field of practical theology and an overview of methodologies for doing practical theological reflection in a variety of contexts. As a field, practical theology is both old and new. Practical theology is concerned with the practices and actions, past and present, of God, individuals, and communities. Practical theology is also concerned with reflecting on these actions with an eye toward renewed or improved practices in the future. Thus, we utilize practical theological methods to help us explore the connections between our religious traditions and convictions and the way we do ministry and/or theological reflection in engagement with the world. This course fulfills the requirement for the practical theology proseminar for the M.A.R. concentration in Practical Theology and is open to other interested students. Area IV. 3 Course cr

### **REL 807b, Introduction to Pastoral Theology and Care** Mary Moschella

As an introduction to pastoral theology and care, this course explores the history, theory, and methods of the care of souls tradition, concentrating on a 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 individuals and communities engage religious diversity in ways they never have before, this seminar seeks to explore theoretical and practical issues in religious identity and 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 rationales and

methods. 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 823b, Trauma, Moral Injury, and Crisis Ministry** Joyce Mercer

This course invites participants into the study of three distinct but overlapping forms of human suffering. Trauma is a person's experience of threat to one's being and/or identity that exceeds resources for coping with the threat, and which resists integration. Moral injury has been identified more recently by scholars and clinicians as a psychological wound involving violation of conscience/deeply held values, either by someone in a position of legitimate authority or by one's self, in a high-stakes situation. Crises are turning-point moments of extreme difficulty or distress that bring to the foreground fundamental questions about life matters such as relationships, purpose/vocation, and the existence and presence of God in human affairs. Engaging practical theology's multidisciplinary approach to these three complex phenomena, we utilize perspectives from theology, psychology, sociology, biology, cinema, and art as frameworks for understanding and responding. We learn and practice basic skills of crisis intervention and trauma-informed pastoral care. Topics include collective trauma, transgenerational trauma transmission, PTSD, "secondary" trauma, post-traumatic growth, crisis theory, suicide, memorialization, and pastoral care in disasters. Area IV. Prerequisite: REL 807 or permission of the instructor. 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 856b, Pastoral Wisdom inside Prison: Fiction, Memoir, and Poetry** 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. Ideally 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: Permission of the instructor. 3 Course cr

**REL 883a, Pastoral Perspectives on Death and Dying** Mary Moschella

This course is designed to increase participants' wisdom, skill, and pastoral sensitivity in times of terminal illness, dying, death, burial, and bereavement. A variety of religious and cultural perspectives are considered. Practice sessions and assignments emphasize the role of chaplains as well as congregational leaders in lending support to individuals, families, and communities. Course literature includes memoirs and readings in pastoral theology, the history of medicine, and the social sciences. Area IV. 3 Course cr

**REL 887a, Narrative Spiritual Care** Mary Moschella

This course offers an in-depth study of narrative spiritual 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 meaning-making process. Such care challenges destructive dominant narratives, such as racist, sexist, and/or homophobic narratives. It also identifies life-giving alternative stories—including biblical and theological stories—that help people re-author their lives. Narrative approaches to individual, couple, family, and collective (community) care are explored. Area IV. 3 Course cr

## PREACHING MINISTRY

**REL 809a, Black Preaching in the Elm City: A Contextual Exploration** Donyelle McCray

This homiletics course foregrounds contextual learning in African American faith communities in New Haven, Connecticut. How might attention to contextual particularity help preachers offer sermons that shape identity, critique oppressive systems, and nurture spiritual growth? In addition to engaging with listeners in specific faith communities in the New Haven area, the course involves exploring histories and theologies of African American preaching. Area IV. Prerequisite: either REL 812, REL 834, or REL 849. 3 Course cr

**REL 812b, Principles and Practices of Preaching** Donyelle McCray

This is the introductory course in theologies and practices of preaching. Students explore a rich variety of approaches to preaching, learn skills for exegeting listening communities, develop their understanding of preaching as public theology, and more. Attention is given to compelling biblical exposition, development of a powerful and supple homiletical imagination, reflection on 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. Area IV. 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. The assignments involve blurring the neat lines that separate preaching from other ways of bearing witness to one's faith. The course examines 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: at least one Area I course. 3 Course cr

**REL 834b, Preaching for Introverts** Donyelle McCray

While preaching is a public practice, some of history's most influential preachers were introverts. How did they manage the demands given their innate constitutions? How can contemporary introverts approach the practice while being true to themselves? This course explores preaching strategies for introverts. Finding ways to make the depth of one's spiritual insights accessible to others is the central task. Students examine strategies for engaging scripture, composing sermons, and relating with listeners. Since conceptions of introversion are largely undergirded by the preacher's identity and relationship to broader cultural contexts, this course gives considerable attention to the ways race and gender inform introversion and include strategies for integrating embodied knowledge and cultural identity. Ultimately, students find ways to proclaim vibrant messages that stir passion for the gospel. Area IV. Prerequisites: at least one Area I course and at least one Area II course. 3 Course cr

**REL 849b, Preaching for Creation** Carolyn Sharp

This course considers ways to bear witness to the inherent value of Earth as a living and interconnected community that teaches profound theological and ethical truths. In discussions and preaching structured around mutual witness and deep listening, students 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; and 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 students listen for the Gospel in sermons focused on creation, explore the potential of micro-homilies to build the capacity of faith communities for ecotheological reflection and creation care, and attend to poetry and memoir writing as sources of wisdom. There is no prerequisite; those for whom this will be their first homiletics course are welcome. This course meets the Homiletics requirement for the M.Div. degree. Area IV. 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. 3 Course cr

## EDUCATIONAL MINISTRY

### **REL 800a, Introduction to Public Theology, Public Policy, and Moral Fusion Movements in America** William Barber

This course introduces students to public theology, public policy, and moral fusion movements in American history. Through a threefold framework of moral analysis, moral articulation, and moral action, students are invited to examine how public theology has impacted the most significant advances in public policy in American history and why pastors and theologians of our time must practice in the tradition of moral leaders who have challenged systemic oppression in the public square and guided critical public policy shifts over the past two centuries. While it is commonplace in American public life to acknowledge that we are, as a people, "more divided than ever," conversations about critical issues impacting our communities are consistently framed by a shared narrative of left versus right, liberal versus conservative, progressive versus traditional. This framing allows for a distorted moral narrative that focuses religious leadership and moral concerns either on a narrow set of personal issues or on wedge issues designed to perpetuate the left/right frame. Religion has been co-opted in American public life to serve the narrow interests of an extreme minority. Throughout this course, students will be called to reimagine what public theology and moral action can look like today, and how they can apply these historical lessons as they develop their own practice of theology. Area IV and Area V 3 Course cr

### **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 811b, Models and Methods of College and University Chaplaincy** Maytal Saltiel and Omer Bajwa

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 enhance 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, guest speakers, and hands-on creative projects involving extensive group work, the class encounters numerous perspectives and approaches. The

course is dedicated to the examination of individual points of view from college and university chaplains from various faith traditions and in different settings (i.e., small liberal arts schools, historically Black colleges, large research institutions, church-based schools) from across the country. These viewpoints also provide seeds for a deeper discussion of issues such as race, class, gender, and sexual orientation within college and university chaplaincies. 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 825b, Music Skills and Vocal Development for Ministry** Awet Andemicael

This course is designed to help those training for lay and ordained ministry to improve their musical and vocal skills as part of the larger process of their transformation into living instruments of God. The course is comprised of three components: skill development, spiritual formation, and theological reflection. Students meet weekly as a class to reflect collectively on theological, spiritual, and practical themes related to music. Class sessions include lectures and interactive presentations by the course instructor and other guest speakers, as well as class discussion about readings and other assignments. In addition, students receive individual weekly vocal coaching from graduate music students, under the primary instructor's supervision. Area IV. 3 Course cr

**REL 835a, Leadership in the Missional Organization or Movement** Sarah Drummond

Top-down, authoritarian practices doom organizations in a quickly changing world to stagnation, implosion, or dismantlement. Institutions that lift creative energies out of all constituents, no matter where they fall in a hierarchy, are far more likely to thrive in today's leadership climate. What theories, practices, attitudes, and habits make for a leader who can guide transformation and foster flourishing in a missional (or “mission-driven” or “transformation-oriented”) movement or organization today? How can leaders recast their authority as a tool, encourage grassroots energies, share leadership across stakeholders, and bring out the best a community has to offer? With a special emphasis on religious leadership and faith-based institutions, coupled with openness to the leadership dynamics of any missional organization, this course explores what makes for effective leadership amidst flat hierarchies in a liminal season. Area IV. 3 Course cr