



Grace Communion Seminary

TM501 Theology of Ministry

Short Syllabus

Instructor: To be arranged, based on your primary area of interest and instructor availability.

GCS mission statement

“Equipping the Saints for Pastoral Ministry.” We are committed to equip the saints for pastoral ministry through quality graduate-level distance education programs in biblical, theological, ministerial and pastoral studies informed by Incarnational Trinitarian faith.

Course description

This course integrates learning from biblical, theological, and ministry studies into a capstone paper that expresses one’s theology of ministry. This three-unit course is conducted as an independent study under the guidance of the professor as a capstone course for the Master of Pastoral Studies degree. **Prerequisite:** Student must be within six units of completing the Master’s program and must pass a summative exam. Students who wish to write a thesis for the MPS degree should choose CM549 Christian Ministry Thesis.

Course requirements

You must pass a summative exam *before* you register for this course.¹ This exam may be taken after you have earned 36 units, or with permission of the Dean of Faculty, dean@gcs.edu. The summative exam will include four essay questions – one on biblical studies, one on theology, one on church history, and one on

¹ The summative exam is graded pass or fail; it does not carry any credit. Contact the Dean of Faculty for further guidance when you are close to taking the exam.

Christian ministry. Sample questions may be obtained from the Dean of Faculty. The exam must be proctored, and must be completed within three hours. For details on proctoring, see the *Academic Catalog*, section VI.B. Since it may take us a week for the exam to be graded, you should take the exam at least a week before you want to register.

Required textbooks

Anderson, Ray S. *The Shape of Practical Theology: Empowering Ministry With Theological Praxis*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001. 342 pages. ISBN: 9780830815593. About \$27 new, less if used.

Harper, Brad, and Paul Louis Metzger. *Exploring Ecclesiology: An Evangelical and Ecumenical Introduction*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2009. 352 pages. ISBN: 9781587431739. About \$17.

Tidball, Derek. *Ministry by the Book: New Testament Patterns for Pastoral Leadership*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2008. 277 pages. ISBN: 9780830838592. About \$20.

Recommended textbooks

Niebuhr, H. Richard. *Christ and Culture*. Expanded edition. San Francisco: Harper, 1951, 2001. 978-0061300035. About \$10.

Stone, Howard W. and James O. Duke. *How to Think Theologically*, 3rd ed. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013. ISBN 978-0800699321. About \$12. Older editions are also acceptable.

Capstone Paper: How Theology Informs Your Ministry

The topic is not how theology informs ministry in general – it is how theology informs *your* ministry. We expect that you will apply what you have learned (in previous GCS courses as well as in the readings for this one) to your own ministry. You will need to describe your own ministry setting and show how theological principles shed light on the purpose and manner of your ministry. But first, you start with three book reviews.

1. Read Derek Tidball, *Ministry by the Book*. Read it all in two weeks. Write a book review. In the first part of the review, describe the merits of this book. In the second part of your review, focus on a chapter that is appropriate to your ministry. For example, chapter 7: “Ministry in a Maturing Church.” Five pages, double spaced, due at the end of the second week of the semester.
2. Read Brad Harper and Paul Louis Metzger, *Exploring Ecclesiology*. Read it within two weeks. Write a book review. In the first part, comment on how the book as a whole informed your understanding of the church. In the second part, focus on a chapter that is appropriate to your ministry. For example, chapter 5, “The Church as a Worshipping Community.” Five pages, double spaced, due at the end of the fourth week of the semester.
3. Read Ray Anderson, *The Shape of Practical Theology*. Read it within three weeks. Choose a chapter that is appropriate for your ministry, and focus your entire review on that chapter (although you may refer to and use insights from the other chapters, too). How did this chapter shed light on what you are doing? Or you may choose a chapter in which you had significant disagreements, and explain why you disagreed. Five pages, double spaced, due at the end of the seventh week of the semester.
4. Your capstone paper, part 1: Describe the circumstances of your ministry, including the history of the ministry, the doctrinal context, and the culture you are working with. In a congregation, for example, you might discuss the range of doctrinal views among the members, the attitude within the church for Bible study, worship, and mission, and the culture of the surrounding community. Your own history, personality and abilities is relevant to the way that you do ministry in this context. Ten to 15 pages, due at the end of the ninth week of the semester.
5. Your capstone paper, part 2: Describe how scripture and theology help inform your ministry, showing what needs to be done in the situation, and how to go about it. What situations in the life of Jesus or Paul provide

insight on the way that ministry should be done? Is your role primarily that of a pioneer, a builder, a priest, a shepherd, a parent, a doctor, or some other role? How do biblical images of the church shape what you do? What theological lens² helps you keep your ministry in better focus?

We expect that you will use all three of the assigned textbooks, plus some books from previous GCS courses, and the Bible.

Part 2 of your paper should be fifteen to 20 pages, due at the end of the 12th week of the semester. Unlike a thesis, this paper is not added to the GCS library and is not a public document.

6. Your grade will be based 40 percent on the book reports and 60 percent on the capstone paper.

Estimated student workload

Assignments, estimated hours, and grade weighting for option A	Hours ³	Percentage of grade
Studying for the summative exam	15	
Taking the summative exam	3.5	
Reading the syllabus	1.5	
Reading Tidball: 234 pages	12	
Reading Harper & Metzger: 274 pages	14	
Reading Anderson: 322 pages	21	
Writing three book reviews, 15 pages	30	40
Writing the thesis paper, 30 pages	120	60
Total – about 18 hours each week	217	100
This is more hours per week than most GCS courses.		

² For example, the lens of “image of God,” or the lens of “kingdom of God,” “family of God,” or “life of the Trinity,” or “life together forever.”

³ This is an estimate for the “average” student. A student who reads quickly may be slow in writing papers, and vice versa. Some students will complete the course requirements in less total time, and some will take more time.