

Course of Study School of Ohio
Hosted at Methodist Theological School in Ohio
COS 323 – CONGREGATIONAL CARE
Summer 2024: July 12-13 and August 2-3

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course introduces students to practices of congregational care and the pastor's responsibility in caregiving. Most of the sessions will be conducted synchronously on Populi per the schedule below. Some asynchronous sessions will be required before each of the two weekends of the course as well.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to:

1. Implement and oversee appropriate types of care in varieties of settings, including prisons, hospitals, nursing facilities, and homes.
2. Organize caring ministries within the congregation.
3. Discern and implement appropriate boundaries, knowing when and to whom to refer people, and when not to share information.
4. Reflect on and practice skills of sensitive caregiving, using role play and analysis of case studies.
5. Come to a deeper understanding of their own strengths and weaknesses through reflection on their families of origins.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Helsel, Philip Browning. *Pastoral Care and Counseling: An Introduction – Care for Stories, Systems, and Selves*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2019. ISBN: 978-0-8091-5390-9

Hoefl, Jeanne, Shannon Jung, and Joretta Marshall. *Practicing Care in Rural Congregations and Communities*. Minneapolis, Minn: Fortress Press, 2013. ISBN: 978-0800699543

Wimberly, Edward. *African American Pastoral Care and Counseling: The Politics of Oppression and Empowerment*. Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2006. ISBN: 082981681X

ASSIGNMENTS

1. DUE by Friday, June 28, 2024 (10% of grade)

Go to the Populi course web site and post a response to the following three bullet points in the course Dashboard.

- Introduce yourself: Your name; the church you are serving; how many years; town/city and Annual Conference.
- What you are most looking forward to in this course.
- What you are most concerned about regarding this course.

2. DUE by Friday, July 5, 2024 (20% of grade)¹

Read *Pastoral Care and Counseling: An Introduction – Care for Stories, Systems, and Selves* by Philip Browning Helsel. Write a page 1500–2000-word paper (approximately 5-6 double-spaced pages) addressing each of the bullet points listed below (which are related to the three sections of the book).

Submit your reflection to the “Assignments” tab on the Populi course web site with the title as follows: Helsel reflection – your last name. (For example: Helsel reflection – Lewis).

1. Section I: Care for Stories

- The author contends that carefully listening to/attending to someone’s story is an act of care that allows the person to feel remembered by God. What are some of the skills/gifts he believes are necessary for a minister to have in order to provide good care for someone’s story? Cite at least one example of a skill/gift that you have in this regard.
- The author also contends that it is vitally important for ministers to attend to their own stories. Why does he believe this is important and what is one aspect of your own story that you would like to understand better?

2. Section II: Care for Systems

- Every person’s individual story is shaped by, and lived out within, a number of systems. Accordingly, the author believes that systemic change is possible and that as an act of care our ministries should advocate for change when necessary. How did Jesus’ own ministry seek to change systems that oppressed people? Cite and explain at least two examples.
- The author identifies three groups of people in Section II who suffer from systemic injustice: the marginalized, the abused, and the addicted. What insights did you gain from this section about your own ministry and how you might advocate for systemic change on behalf of one or more of these groups? Cite and explain at least two examples.

¹ Professional acknowledgment: Some of the questions in the assignments are adapted from a version of this course taught by Dr. Brad Binau of Trinity Lutheran Seminary at Capital University in Columbus, Ohio.

3. Section III: Care for Selves

- Caring for the stories of others (and the systems that influence them) will almost certainly, lead to burnout if we do not care for ourselves. On a scale of 1-10 (1 being utterly useless and 10 being amazingly useful) how useful did you find this section of the book regarding your own self care? Give at least two examples of things you found useful or useless.
- What is one self-care activity that you currently practice and how is it helpful? What is one self-care practice you would like to begin and how do you imagine it could be helpful?

3. DUE by Friday, July 12, 2024: Reflection on Hoeft et al. (20% of grade)

Read *Practicing Care in Rural Congregations and Communities* by Hoeft, Jung, and Marchall. Write a 1500–2000-word paper (approximately 5-6 double-spaced pages) addressing the bullet points listed below. Submit your reflection to the “Assignments” tab on the Populi course web site with the title as follows: Hoeft reflection – your last name. (For example: Hoeft reflection – Lewis).

- How do Hoeft, Jung, and Marshall define pastoral care in rural congregations and communities and how different is it from care in non-rural settings?
- What are the challenges the rural church and its (various) contexts face? In what ways can ministry in small town and country churches be enhanced by the study and practice of care as presented by Hoeft and her colleagues?
- The authors report that rural pastors they talked to in preparation for this book reported that “one of their greatest difficulties in congregations of rural churches was the lack of understanding and respect the congregations received from the larger church” (p.173). In what ways does this book challenge any lack of understanding and respect for rural churches? Does the point made by these pastors reflect your experience and understanding? If yes, in what ways?
- In your estimation, what can the United Methodist Church learn from a close study of rural and small-town congregations and their contexts?
- What can non-rural congregations learn from rural congregations with regard to pastoral care and congregational life?

4. DUE by Friday, August 2, 2024: Reflection on Wimberly (20% of grade)

Read *African American Pastoral Care and Counseling: The Politics of Oppression and Empowerment*, by Edward Wimberly. Write a Write a page 1500–2000-word paper (approximately 5-6 double-spaced pages) addressing the following three items listed below.

Submit your reflection to the “Assignments” tab on the Populi course web site with the title as follows: Wimberly reflection – your last name. (For example: Wimberly reflection – Lewis)

- Three terms/concepts are prominent in Wimberly’s book:
 - “recruited”
 - “political theology”
 - “modernity”

Define any two of these concepts in your own words and cite an example from your own ministry of where you have encountered this concept (perhaps without even knowing at the time what you were encountering).

- The United Methodist Church requires this book as a text for COS 323. Citing examples from the book and from your own ministry, make a case for whether you agree or disagree with this requirement.
- Wimberly includes many, many vignettes in his book – some from his own life, some from literature, some from the real-life stories of other people. Cite any two such vignettes you choose (reference the pages on which they are found). For each vignette:
 - Explain in your own words the point(s) you believe Wimberly is trying to make by including the vignette.
 - Explain in what way(s) and for what purpose(s) you could use these vignettes in your own ministry.

5. DUE by Saturday, August 3, 2024: Pastoral Care Policy and Resource Guide (20% of grade)

After completing our readings and work in our course this term, prepare a pastoral care policy and resource guide that:

- a) Reflects your individual plan for pastoral ministry. This policy needs to include awareness and establishment of appropriate boundaries (time, topics, setting, etc.), state laws regarding mandatory reporting, your congregation's safe sanctuary policy, and clearly defined plans for gathering information and for referral. This is not an exhaustive list, but here are some things to consider and include:
 - What theological understandings inform your practice of pastoral care and conversation?
 - How long will pastoral conversations last? How many sessions will you offer before you refer?
 - Will you meet with parishioners alone? If not, who will be present? If so, will another person know when/where the meeting is taking place?
 - What topics or situations will require you to immediately refer?
 - How will you handle pre-marital conversations?
 - How will you and your congregation discern boundaries related to disclosure of information? Who needs to know what? What information will not be shared?
- b) Include a comprehensive resource guide that provides contact information for counseling/other support and assistance beyond yourself. To complete this section, think of the top 5 needs for your congregation.
 - Consider all the potential needs that may present themselves: pregnancy, sexuality, divorce, adoption, troubled children, addiction, poverty, unemployment, mental illness, inability to buy medication or seek medical care, lack of insurance, domestic violence, child abuse, elder abuse, onset of dementia, transportation challenges, rental assistance, utility assistance, etc.

- For each need you identify, include a minimum of 5 resources in your community that you can provide your parishioners to help them meet their need. In addition to the resources you identify, please include 5 resources for counselors in your area. In total, you should have 30 resources for this section.
- This should include the name of the agency, contact person, address, phone number, and brief description of the service they provide.

This policy & resource guide should be a comprehensive document that you can share with your staff and congregational leaders.

CLASS PARTICIPATION: (10% of grade)

You are expected to participate verbally, physically, emotionally and spiritually in the course in appropriate ways. This means you are expected to offer your ideas without dominating the discussion, be physically calm but not to the point of falling asleep, be vulnerable without wearing your emotional life “on your sleeve,” and open yourself to the leading of the Spirit without insisting on the superiority of your theology or piety.

WRITING TIP

While you are writing your papers in your own words, it is important that you also give evidence of what the authors think by briefly quoting directly from their voices and providing page numbers where the author is discussing the ideas you are referencing. Whether you agree or disagree with the authors you read, the main objective of the written assignments is to demonstrate that you can critically and reflectively engage the reading material and integrate it with your own thinking and pastoral experience

LEARNING TIPS

Classroom work will include class discussion of the readings, focusing on selected key topics and issues; and also role plays and case studies. The experiential and interactive nature of these class sessions is intended to give you the most effective form of adult learning experience. It also presupposes that you are willing to participate fully in all that the class invites you to do. The more open you are to this learning experience, the more you will gain from it.

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

Subject to change at the discretion of the instructor.

WEEK ONE

Friday, July 12, 2024

5:00p-6:00p ~ Listening: Caring for Stories

6:00p-7:00p ~ Family Systems: Caring for Selves

Saturday, July 13, 2024

9:00a-10:00a ~ Small Groups: Family Stories

10:00a-11:00a ~ Premarital & Marital Care

11:15a-12:00p ~ Online chapel

Break for Lunch

1:00p-2:00p ~ Role Play

2:00p-3:00p ~ Rural & Small-Town Ministry

WEEK TWO

Friday, August 2, 2024

5:00p-6:00p ~ Crisis Situations

6:00p-7:00p ~ Addiction & Recovery Ministry

Saturday, August 3, 2024

9:00a-10:00a ~ Care for Systems: Systemic Racism

10:00a-11:00a ~ Settings/Contexts: Homes, Hospitals, Prisons, Care Facilities

11:15a-12:00p ~ Online chapel

Break for Lunch

1:00p-2:00p ~ Grief & Loss

2:00p-3:00p ~ Intimacy in Ministry (i.e. “Minding Boundaries”)

GRADES

Students who have previously taken classes in the Course of Study School know that evaluations are done according to the following categories: Overall Academic Performance, Written Communication, and Relational Skills.

ACADEMIC HONOR

The Course of Study School of Ohio requires that all material submitted by a student in fulfilling his or her academic requirements be the original work of the student.

Violations of academic honor include any action by a student indicating dishonesty or lack of integrity in academic ethics. Violations in this category include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, or knowingly passing off work of another as one’s own.

Cheating includes seeking, acquiring, receiving or passing on information about the

content of an examination prior to its authorized release or during its administration. Cheating also includes seeking, using, giving or obtaining unauthorized assistance in any academic assignment or examination.

Plagiarism is the act of presenting as one's own work with the work of another whether published or unpublished (including the work of another student). A writer's work should be regarded as his or her own property. Any person who knowingly uses a writer's distinctive work without proper acknowledgement is guilty of plagiarism.

A student found guilty of a violation of the academic honor code, after a review of the case, may be subject to one or more of the following actions: (1) warning; (2) probation; (3) suspension for the remainder of the course; (4) dismissal from the Course of Study School of Ohio; (5) grade of Fail for the course. Regardless of the outcome, a letter will be sent to the student's District Superintendent and Board of Ordained Ministry representative.

COSSO ATTENDANCE POLICY

National policy from the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM) states that a student is expected to attend every class session. Unexcused absences may be cause for loss of credit or dismissal from the school. A student missing 20% or more of the classroom work shall not receive credit for the class. In the event of extenuating circumstances which require the student to miss up to 20% of the synchronous course time (whether in-person or on Zoom), the student should contact both the instructor and the Director prior to the start of the class to get approval and discuss make-up work. (Extenuating circumstances include emergency situations, illness, and dire circumstances, for example. Students are to provide back-up coverage at the local church while attending COS classes.)

Cancellation and Withdrawal: Student must notify the COSSO office if they will be unable to attend class for which they are registered. Although there is no penalty when withdrawing more than two weeks in advance of the beginning of a term, registration fees are nontransferable and nonrefundable. A \$50.00 late withdrawal fee is charged for all withdrawals within two weeks of the start of a class. All tuition and housing payments are applied to a future term.

Students withdrawing after the start of a term will be assigned a grade of AW (Administrative Withdrawal) and will be responsible for the full \$300.00 tuition amount. Any annual conference scholarship applied to the student billing record becomes the student's responsibility and is due by the end of the term. Housing payment is non-refundable.

No Shows: Except in cases of immediate and dire emergencies, if a student misses any class without notifying the COSSO office, tuition and housing fees are due immediately, a \$50.00 no show fee is charged, and the student will receive an "F" in the class.