



MS 5YC5/6YC6 SYLLABUS
Advanced Research in Practical Theology Winter 2017

McMaster Divinity College
Phil C. Zylla, D.Th.
Office #: 215 Ext. 20104

Winter Term 2017
Tuesday 1:30-3:20 p.m.

n.b. This course is an advanced 5/6 course for Doctor of Practical Theology and Master of Arts (Christian Studies); Doctor of Philosophy (Christian Theology) students only

Biography:

Dr. Phil Zylla is Academic Dean and Associate Professor of Pastoral Theology at McMaster Divinity College. His research interests include pastoral theology, theological ethics, theopoetics and spirituality. He is author of *The Roots of Sorrow: A Pastoral Theology of Suffering* and is currently working on a volume entitled *The Spiritual Formation of the Congregation*. Before moving into theological education in 2001 Dr. Zylla was active in pastoral ministry in the Canadian context for over 18 years. He is married to Melodie and lives in Ancaster, ON.

Course Description:

The past twenty years has witnessed a significant increase in academic research in the field of *Practical Theology*. Such literature is a significant indicator of the emerging intellectual and spiritual search to find foundational understandings that will support the advancement of the mission of the church in the world. Of course, this is not a new interest – the church has always deliberately reflected on its mission and practices. However, the widely felt need for expanding the nucleus of academic literature to support the theoretical interests of practical theology represent a new phase of this inquiry. This course is a call for constructive imagination and humility in approaching the great questions that emerge from Edward Farley calls, “the ecclesial existence and the constitutive activities” of the church in the world. The structure of the course seeks to draw widely from various thinkers who have helped to shape current perspectives of *Practical Theology* through their scholarly contributions. Participants in this course will be invited to embrace the intriguing challenge of developing informed and carefully researched contributions of their own, regardless of the complexity of such a task.

*“...my contention is that at the heart of every good theology lies not simply a plausible intellectual vision but more importantly a compelling account of a way of life, and that theology is therefore best done from within the pursuit of this way of life.” - Miroslav Volf, “Theology for a Way of Life” in *Practicing Theology*, Miroslav Volf and Dorothy C. Bass, eds., (2002), 247.*

*“The basic task that orients practical theology is to promote faithful discipleship. . . We speak of the purpose that sets the basic task of practical theology as supporting and sustaining lived discipleship. Rooted in Christian tradition, practical theology focuses on called people who manifest a particular faith through concrete ways of life.” Kathleen A. Cahalan and James R. Nieman, “Mapping the Field of Practical Theology” in *For Life Abundant*, 2008, 67.*

*“Practical theology is critical, theological reflection on the practices of the Church as they interact with the practices of the world, with a view to ensuring and enabling faithful participation in God’s redemptive practices in, to and for the world.” – John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 2006, 6.*

Course Objectives:

Knowing

1. To orient participants to the theoretical understanding of the field of practical theology.
2. To explore the current literature that supports academic research in the field of practical theology.
3. To provide the foundational insight into the nature and scope of practice-led research.

Being

1. To become cognizant of the personal trajectory of one’s own aspirations to contribute to the on-going mission of the church in the world.
2. To inspire a personal sense of mission and calling to the work of academic practical theology.
3. To discern the ways in which one is being led to support the intellectual and theoretical research needs of the contemporary church.

Doing

1. To evaluate some of the foundational literature in the field of practical theology in order to develop working assumptions regarding practice-led research in this field of study.
2. To distinguish the elements of contemporary practical theology in such a way as to locate oneself in the field and to anticipate possible paths for on-going research in this area of study.
3. To demonstrate orientation to the principles of practice-led research required for one’s own chosen focus area within the wider field of practical theology.
4. To research and join an academic society related to one’s chosen area of focus in practical theology with the aim of participation over the next several years.

Required Course Textbooks (DPT):

Bass, Dorothy C. and Craig Dykstra, eds., *For Life Abundant: Practical Theology, Theological Education, and Christian Ministry*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2008.

Miller-McLemore, Bonnie J., ed., *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology*. Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2014. [selected essays]

Mudge, Lewis S. and Poling, James N., eds. *Formation and Reflection: The Promise of Practical Theology*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987.

Osmer, Richard R. *Practical Theology: An Introduction*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2008.

Palmer, Parker

To Know as We are Known: Education as a Spiritual Journey. San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1983.

Smith, Hazel and Roger Dean, *Practice-Led Research, Research-led Practice in the Creative Arts.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. 2009.

PhD Students should submit a reading list for approval of an additional eight volumes relevant to their own focus in practical theology.

COURSE OUTLINE Tuesdays 1:30-3:20 p.m.

January 10th Confessions of a Practical Theologian

James D. Whitehead, "The Practical Play of Theology" in *Formation and Reflection: The Promise of Practical Theology*, Lewis S. Mudge and James N. Poling, eds., 36-54.

Thomas H. Groome, "Theology on our Feet: A Revisionist Pedagogy for Healing the Gap Between Academia and Ecclesia" in *Formation and Reflection: The Promise of Practical Theology*, Lewis S. Mudge and James N. Poling, eds., 55-78.

John Reader, *Reconstructing Practical Theology*, Chapter 1, "A Changing World", 1-17; Chapter 5, "Reflexive Spirituality and Globalization", 2008, 73-80

January 17th The Nature of Practical Theology

Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research* , 2006, 3-27

Kathleen A. Cahalan and James R. Nieman, "Mapping the Field of Practical Theology" in *For Life Abundant*, Dorothy C. Bass and Craig Dykstra, eds.

Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, "Five Misunderstandings about Practical Theology." *International Journal of Practical Theology*, Vol. 16, No. 1, 2012, 5-26.

"Theology should not be subdivided into independent fields of study to the extent that it becomes no more than the aggregate of all these sub-disciplines. A field of study is not a section of theology; it is a particular perspective on theology [that is] an indivisible whole." LM Heyns and HJC Pieterse, *A Primer in Practical Theology*, 5.

From: *The Blackwell Reader in Pastoral and Practical Theology*, James Woodward and Stephen Pattison, eds.,

1. Stephen Pattison and James Woodward, "An Introduction to Pastoral and Practical Theology", 1-19.
2. Alastair Campbell, "The Nature of Practical Theology", 77-88.
3. Paul Ballard, "The Emergence of Pastoral and Practical Theology in Britain", 59-72.
4. Elaine Graham, "Practical Theology as Transforming Practice", 89-103.

January 24th Envisioning Practical Theology

Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, ed., *The Wiley Blackwell Companion for Practical Theology*. 2014, 1-88.

Dorothy C. Bass and Craig Dykstra, eds. *For Life Abundant: Practical Theology, Theological Education, and Christian Ministry, Part I*, “Envisioning Practical Theology”, 2008, 1-85.

January 31st Method in Practical Theology

The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology, Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, ed., *Part II*, “Method: Studying Theology in Practice”, 89-266.

*****each participant choose one essay to report*****

From: *The Blackwell Reader in Pastoral and Practical Theology*, James Woodward and Stephen Pattison, eds.,

1. Stephen Pattison, “Some Straw for the Bricks: A Basic Introduction to Theological Reflection”, 133-145.
2. Emmanuel Lartey, “Practical Theology as Theological Form”, 128-134.

From: *Formation and Reflection*, Lewis S. Mudge and James N. Poling, eds.

1. Edward Farley, “Interpreting Situations”, 1-26.

February 7th Four Tasks of Practical Theology

Richard Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction*, 2008, 1-218

“Practical theological interpretation involves four key tasks: the descriptive-empirical, the interpretive, the normative, and the pragmatic. It is helpful to conceptualize these four tasks with the image of a hermeneutical circle, which portrays interpretation as composed of distinct but interrelated moments . . . the four tasks of practical theological interpretation interpenetrate.” - Richard R. Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction*, 11.

February 14th From Ministry to Theology

Charles E. Winquist, “Revisioning Ministry: Postmodern Reflections” in *Formation and Reflection: The Promise of Practical Theology*, Lewis S. Mudge and James Poling, eds., 27-35.

John Patton, *From Ministry to Theology*, 1-128.

Don S. Browning, “Practical Theology and Religious Education” in *Formation and Reflection: The Promise of Practical Theology*, Lewis S. Mudge and James N. Poling, eds., 79-102.

February 21st Reading Week – no class

February 28st Practice-Led Research

Smith, Hazel and Roger Dean, *Practice-Led Research, Research-led Practice in the Creative Arts*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. 2009.

Carole Gray “From the Ground Up: Encountering Theory in the Process of Practice-led Doctoral Research,” *In Theory? Encounters with Theory in Practice-based PhD Research in Art and Design*, AHRC Postgraduate Conference, De Montfort University and Loughborough Universities, UK, 26 June 2007.
online: <http://carolegray.net/Papers%20PDFs/ngnm.pdf>

Linda Candy, “Practice Based Research: A Guide.” CCS Report (Sydney: Creativity and Cognition Studios, University of Technology, November 2006).
<http://www.creativityandcognition.com/resources/PBR%20Guide-1.1-2006.pdf>

March 7th The Bible and Practical Theology

The Bible in Pastoral Practice. Paul Ballard and Stephen Holmes, eds. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2006.

or

Donald Capps, *Pastoral Care and Hermeneutics*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984, 1-128.

*recommended readings/not required

**March 14th Guest Lecture: Research Ethics Guidelines
Dr. Kelvin Mutter**

March 21st Practice-Led Research Presentations Part I

March 28th Practice-Led Research Presentations Part II

April 4th The Vocation of the Practical Theologian

Lewis S. Mudge, “Thinking in the Community of Faith: Toward an Ecclesial Hermeneutic” in *Formation and Reflection: The Promise of Practical Theology*, Lewis S. Mudge and James N. Poling, eds., 103-119.

Parker Palmer, *To Know as We are Known*, 1983.

April 11th Servant Scholarship for the Church

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

1. Literature Review on Practice-led Research

20 marks

Write an 8-10 page review of critical literature on practice-led research. The summary should include 8-10 scholarly books or peer-reviewed articles on practice-led research with a one page

entry for each item. Each summary should include: a. a description of the primary contribution of the book/article to the literature b. a brief summary of the primary insights gained from reading the book/article and c. a brief statement about how this supports your own work in practice-led research.

Due: February 28, 2017

2.

20 marks

DPT students - Presentation of Individual Creative Proposal for Professional Practice

Each course participant will create a proposal related to professional practice in his or her chosen focus area in the Doctor of Practical Theology program. The proposal should be creative and draw from the experience that the participant has in the practice. It may also include interviewing other professionals who share in this practice and garner their insight and wisdom on the proposed research issue. [Participants are reminded that any course-related research that involve human participants requires Research Ethics Board approval from McMaster University. Please consult with the professor if you want to include a qualitative research interview]. The proposals will be presented in class for review and feedback from peers. A sign up list on the first day of class will guide the presentation date. **Due: March 21st or March 28th**

PhD students – Development of draft proposal of PhD Dissertation

Each PhD student will develop a draft of their dissertation proposal with particular attention to theoretical underpinnings and methodology. The focus of the dissertation should be crystallized enough to create a working bibliography and a structured pathway for the research agenda attached to the accomplishment of the dissertation. The scholar will be expected to demonstrate an understanding and critical analysis of various theoretical approaches, with a view to developing their own theoretical framework. The scholar is expected to demonstrate, in this draft proposal, an ability to think critically about the theory, concepts, practices and research approach that guide the production of knowledge and meaning making in their focused area of research.

3. Locating Yourself in the Field of Practical Theology

20 marks

One of the key goals of this course is to sift through the general field of practical theology in order to locate yourself as a practical theologian. It is essential that you come to terms with your own vocational history, your sense of personal mission and identity, and discover the approach that will sustain you as you enter into the field as a professional practical theologian. This should be written in a **10-15 page essay** which includes the following elements:

- a. autobiography – Describe your vocational, intellectual, ecclesial and spiritual history.
- b. Give an account of your intellectual and spiritual mentors.
- c. Describe your current understanding of practical theology.
- d. Summarize your educational path [including your current program].
- e. Describe your current relationships and plans in respect to ecclesiastical bodies and academic societies.
- f. What are your five year goals in the field of practical theology (looking ahead)?
- g. Outline concrete plans that you are making to establish your voice as a practical theologian.
- h. Include significant interaction with the readings of the course, especially the methodological choices that you are forming as a practical theologian.

Due: March 28, 2017

4. Essay in Practical Theology **6000 words (DPT)** **40 marks**
10,000 words (PhD)

Write an academic essay (6000/10,000 words) that critically engages theory and practice in your area of focus. Draw deeply from the course material and locate your essay in the larger discussion of the field of practical theology. Describe the theoretical lense that you will be using in your primary research and offer detailed consideration of the methodology that will be employed.

The essay should reflect:

- a. a carefully selected meta-practice that is relevant to the participant's own vocational experience and research direction
- b. a thoughtful articulation of problems and issues related to research in this area of practical theology and potential solutions
- c. skill in selecting and appropriating methods that will yield productive research in this area
- d. location of this topic within the wider field of practical theology
- e. demonstration of capacity to contribute to practice-led research on the chosen topic

Due: April 11, 2017

Late Papers: Late assignments will be docked 1% each late day. (Extensions will only be granted in exceptional circumstances such as extended illness, etc.) Please make an appointment during office hours to receive approval for any changes in assignment due dates.

Spacing: All assignments are to be double-spaced.

Hard Copy Submission: All assignments are due in hard copy by the end of office hours on that day (5 p.m.) Permission to submit electronic papers may be granted for commuting students but must be secured from the course professor beforehand.

Contacting the Professor: Dr. Phil C. Zylla

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Consultation with Professor: by appointment [contact me directly by email zyllap@mcmaster.ca or my Executive Assistant, Ashley Thomas, ashthom@mcmaster.ca

College Style for Submission of Written Work:

All written work—unless informed otherwise by the professor—is to be submitted in accordance with the *McMaster Divinity College Style Guide for Essays and Theses*, available on the McMaster Divinity College web-site.

Statement on Academic Honesty:

Academic dishonesty is a serious offence that may take any number of forms, including plagiarism, the submission of work that is not one's own or for which previous credit has been obtained, and/or unauthorized collaboration with other students. Academic dishonesty can result in severe consequences, e.g. failure of the assignment, failure of the course, a notation on one's academic transcript, and/or suspension or expulsion from the College.

Students are responsible for understanding what constitutes academic dishonesty. Please refer to the Divinity College Statement on Academic Honesty at www.macdiv.ca/regs/honesty.php.

Gender Inclusive Language:

McMaster Divinity College uses inclusive language for human beings in worship services, student written materials, and all of its publications. In reference to biblical texts, the integrity of the original expressions and the names of God should be respected. The NRSV and TNIV are examples of the use of inclusive language for human beings. It is expected that inclusive language will be used in chapel services and all MDC assignments.

READ ON Bookstore: Textbooks are available from READ ON Bookstore, Room 218 at MacDiv. Or Phone: 416-622-2934; Fax: 416-622-2308; Email: books@readon.ca

Disclaimer: This syllabus is the property of the instructor and is prepared with currently available information. The instructor reserves the right to make changes and revisions up until the first day of class.