

# PRACTICES OF FAITH

MCMASTER DIVINITY COLLEGE MS 3XF3 / 5XF5 / 6XF6

MODIFIED HYBRID SYLLABUS, FALL 2019

(7 classes face-to-face on Tuesdays, 4:00 – 5:50 p.m., and 6 classes online. See schedule below.)



Photo © Wendy J. Porter

What does a photo of a chipmunk have to do with practices of faith? Both invite you to stop and notice. Notice that noticing itself is a practice of faith that we will explore.

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### Invitation to this Course

Practices of faith come to life when you stop to notice them. Practices of faith are ways that we live with intentionality, whether in pastoral ministry, in academic work, or simply in the context of life and a faith community. Practices of faith are everyday practices. Some take place in our churches, but also in our workplaces, lay ministries, neighbourhoods, and families. When we notice and embrace practices of faith, we live more fully. In this course, we will explore how practices of faith enrich our lives when we notice them and recognize their value. We will even explore how “noticing” might be a practice of faith. Practices of faith include groupings of everyday activities (such as honouring our body, household economics). Some manifest themselves in a crisis (healing, dying well). Some indwell our worship spaces but are not confined to them (singing our lives, testimony). Practices of faith influence decision-making (saying yes and saying no, discernment, keeping Sabbath), our approach to leadership (shaping communities), and our personal interactions (forgiveness). A single practice of faith may intersect all of our places of worship, home, community, and workplace (such as hospitality). We

will explore each practice noted above in parentheses, as well as others, some developed in community, others fostered in solitude.

This course provides the opportunity to develop greater spiritual awareness and intentionality in our practices, whether for deeper personal enrichment, wiser pastoral leadership, more compassionate interpersonal ministry, or greater integration of faith and practice in the academy. This course prompts you to situate yourself and your community in relation to practices of faith and challenges you to move towards a fuller perspective on how God's Spirit is at work in and through the daily practices of our lives, ministries, and careers.

As a student in this course you will choose one practice to investigate in a short paper and video reflection, you will gain experience in thinking about and interacting with fellow students in weekly reflections and responses to a wide range of practices of faith, and you will culminate your semester with a full paper or a creative project on a practice of faith that is relevant to you, your ministry, and your community, and you will share highlights with fellow students.

### **Where this Course Fits at MDC**

This course is available to students in the MTS, MDiv, DPT, or PhD programs. See the following descriptions.

**MTS and MDiv Students** may select this course within one of three specialisations or as one of your Free Electives. You may shape assignments to fit with one of these three specializations: PS (Pastoral Studies), CW (Christian Worldview), or CS (Counselling and Spiritual Care). Your course code is MS 3XF3. You should plan to shape your final assignment towards your specialization but are also welcome and encouraged to shape your weekly postings towards this specialization whenever possible.

#### CS Specialization = Counselling and Spiritual Care

The Counselling and Spiritual Care specialization is designed for those in chaplaincy, pastors with family ministry responsibilities, those in NGO work or other social ministries. Possible ways to apply this course towards your specialization: focus your work towards the task of overseeing spiritual care through a practice of faith in a church or parachurch context; find ways to identify and develop core skills in spiritual care through one or more of the practices of faith; investigate the role of a practice of faith as foundational training for chaplaincy ministry; consider how a practice of faith may help you to develop in effective pastoral intervention; explore practices of faith in conjunction with ethical issues in spiritual care.

#### CW Specialization = Christian Worldview (MTS default specialization)

The Christian Worldview specialization is designed for those in para-church ministries or lay ministry leadership, as well as in general theological study. Possible ways to apply this course towards your specialization: focus on a practice of faith that helps you develop a framework for reflective engagement with creation and culture; consider a practice of faith as a way to engage and dialogue with other worldviews (hermeneutical, global, religious, creedal, ethnic); evaluate how a practice of faith provides opportunity to increase sensitivity to the globalized character of life and ministry or for constructive dialogue; explore a practice of faith from the perspective of how church history and tradition have shaped your worldview or those around you.

PS Specialization = Pastoral Studies (MDiv default specialization)

The Pastoral Studies specialization is designed for senior/associate pastors, lead pastors, and other full-time vocational ministers with leadership responsibilities. Possible ways to apply this course towards your specialization: study a practice of faith that relates to your leadership strategies in pastoral ministry; investigate how a practice of faith may influence practical and ethical decisions for a coherent Christian worldview; develop a practice of faith that fosters spiritual skills and competencies in others; consider how a practice of faith identifies and nurtures various spiritual temperaments; shape your work on a practice of faith to more effectively communicate Christian principles, values, and worldview.

**DPT Students** may choose this course as one of your Advanced Electives. Consider how one or more practices of faith fit within your overall practice of ministry. Your course code is MS 5XF5. You should select a further course textbook that explores a particular practice of faith that is relevant to your ministry or work. If possible, shape your final paper or project towards your focus area in the DPT. You are welcome to integrate as many of your weekly posting assignments with your own practice of ministry as possible. Please be in touch with me prior to or early in the semester to discuss ways that you might accomplish your goals for this course. Email is usually the best way to reach me: [porterw@mcmaster.ca](mailto:porterw@mcmaster.ca).

**PhD Students**, in particular those in Ministry Studies, may choose this course to apply your research skills to a practice of faith in order to develop a theoretical framework with which to proceed further in your academic studies. Your course code is MS 6FX6. You should select at least one further course textbook that explores a particular practice of faith that is relevant to you and your academic interests. You are welcome to shape your final paper or project towards your own academic interests and dissertation. You are also, however, welcome to take this course as a way to enrich your own Christian walk and your meaningful engagement in the community of faith around you. Those focused primarily on a career in the academy may find that there is a richness of experience in a course such as this for developing a spiritual life-work integration that can travel with you into your life as a faculty member, researcher, etc. Please be in touch with me prior to or early in the semester to discuss ways that you might engage most meaningfully in this course. Email is usually the best way to reach me: [porterw@mcmaster.ca](mailto:porterw@mcmaster.ca).

**Audit Students** may enroll in this course by permission of the instructor and are expected to participate in each class day and in the weekly postings.

## Tentative Course Schedule

Week	Date	Mode	Assignment	Due
Week 1	Tues, Sept 10	<b>face to face 1</b>		
Week 2	Tues, Sept 17		<b>online 1</b>	padlet 1
Week 3	Tues, Sept 24	<b>face to face 2</b>		padlet 2
Week 4	Tues, Oct 1		<b>online 2</b>	padlet 3
Week 5	Tues, Oct 8	<b>face to face 3</b>		padlet 4
				DUE: Short Paper + Video Reflection <b>20%</b>
NO CLASS	Tues, Oct 15	Hybrid Intensive Week: No Class		
Week 6	Tues, Oct 22		<b>online 3</b>	padlet 5
Week 7	Tues, Oct 29	<b>face to face 4</b>		padlet 6
Week 8	Tues, Nov 5		<b>online 4</b>	padlet 7
Week 9	Tues, Nov 12	<b>face to face 5</b>		padlet 8
Week 10	Tues, Nov 19		<b>online 5</b>	padlet 9
Week 11	Tues, Nov 26		<b>online 6</b>	padlet 10
Week 12	Tues, Dec 3	<b>face to face 6</b>		padlet 11
				DUE: Final Assignment <b>40%</b> DUE: Presentations Group 1
Week 13	Tues, Dec 10	<b>face to face 7</b> The two final weeks are both face to face.		padlet 12 DUE: Final Post: <b>40%</b>
				DUE: Presentations Group 2

## Learning Outcomes

### Knowing

Upon completion of this course, you should be able to...

- **validate** the practices of faith (from the Bass book) in your own life or community and **articulate** their relevance and challenges
- **identify** other practices of faith with potential meaning for you and your community
- **evaluate** a personal or communal practice of faith in a short paper and reflection
- **stimulate** thoughtful conversations about how practices influence faith and faith influences practice, and where gaps exist between faith and practice
- **investigate** and **narrate** or **illustrate** the significance of a practice of faith in a final paper or project and through a thoughtful reflective presentation

### Doing

Upon completion of this course, you should be able to...

- **cultivate** at least one specific practice of faith, as explored throughout the semester
- **illuminate** and **illustrate** numerous practices through thoughtful postings on Padlet
- **reciprocate** thoughtful responses to other people's perceptions and perspectives on practices, as exemplified in weekly responses to others in Padlet
- **engage** in a practice of faith that corresponds to your investigation or creative exploration in your final paper or project, and **captivate** fellow classmates with your presentation
- **stimulate** further personal and communal application for this practice in life and ministry

## Being

Upon completion of this course, you should be able to...

- **locate** yourself in relation to practices of faith
- **celebrate** your being and live more fully into what it means to be a person of faith
- **radiate** the being that God has created you to be and live faithfully into that calling
- **consecrate** your being in daily ways that have integrity and purpose

## Required Textbooks

Miroslav Volf and Dorothy Bass, eds. *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002.

Dorothy Bass, ed. *Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People*. 2nd edn. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2010 [1997].

The 12 Practices from Bass, ed., *Practicing Our Faith*, include:

Honouring the Body	Keeping Sabbath	Forgiveness
Hospitality	Testimony	Healing
Household Economics	Discernment	Dying Well
Saying Yes and Saying No	Shaping Communities	Singing Our Lives

There are many other practices, some of which we will touch on, and your research or creative focus can be on any practice for which you can make a compelling case.

## Possible Additional Textbooks

DPT and PhD students should select one or more additional textbooks. The following are possible choices that focus on a specific practice, but you may propose ones that are more focused on your area of interest, or that are theological or theoretical approaches to practices of faith overall. Students in any program may find one or more of these valuable for assignments:

Bass, Dorothy. *Receiving the Day: Christian Practices for Opening the Gift of Time*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2000.

Hicks, Douglas A. *Money Enough: Everyday Practices for Living Faithfully in the Global Economy*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2010.

Long, Thomas G. *Testimony: Talking Ourselves into Being Christian*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2004.

Miller-McLemore, Bonnie J. *In the Midst of Chaos: Caring for Children as a Spiritual Practice*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2007.

Paulsell, Stephanie. *Honoring the Body: Meditations on a Christian Practice*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2002.

Saliers, Don, and Emily Saliers. *A Song to Sing, A Life to Live: Reflections on Music as Spiritual Practice*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2005.

Wolfteich, Claire E. *Lord, Have Mercy: Praying for Justice with Conviction and Humility*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2006.

## Assignments

**1. Weekly Padlet. 40%.** Due weekly by Tuesdays at 4:00 p.m., starting on the week of Tuesday, September 17 (Class Week 2). There are 12 postings, concluding on the final class day. Each week focus on one of the 12 practices of faith that are highlighted in Bass, ed., *Practicing Our Faith*, with the option of choosing any two weeks to explore a different practice.

In the final post on the final class day, also include a brief reflection on what you have learned through making or reading or responding to these Padlet postings. Provide thoughtful responses to a minimum of two other student postings each week. Post your own reflection by the beginning of each class (Tuesdays at 4:00 p.m.). Post your responses by Thursday of that same week. Each week there will be a new Padlet available, so if you post late, other students may not read or respond to your post, as they have begun to work on the next one. The earlier you post your own reflection and your responses, the better our class will function as a community.

Word count (approximately) per individual weekly post:

MTS / MDiv: 150–200 words

DPT / PhD: 300–350 words

Thoughtful Responses: minimum 25–50 words, minimum 2 responses per week

**Padlet Postings Penalties:** If you are notoriously (that is, regularly) late in your reflection posting (after Tuesdays at the beginning of class) or in your responses to others (after Thursdays), this will be reflected in your mark. A simple way to guarantee a reasonably good mark in this assignment is simply to do it and to post on time. Highest marks will be reserved for those who provide timely thoughtful and insightful posts and responses to others.

**2. Short Paper + Video Reflection. 20%.** Choose a practice of interest and relevance to explore and reflect on in this short paper early in the semester. It is reasonable to choose one of the 12 practices, but you may choose an alternative. Ideally, choose a practice other than what you will explore for your final assignment; however, if you think it is particularly valuable to explore the same one in both assignments, and they will not duplicate each other, please be in touch with me (in advance) to make your case for this. The final step in this assignment is to post a short video (1–3 minutes) that provides some highlights of your reflections on this practice of faith. For instance, what did you learn in the process of exploring this practice in your short paper? How were/are you challenged by this practice, or surprised by it? What new insights do you have about it, or about yourself, or about a community, or about God?

Word length for short paper:

MTS and MDiv: 750

DPT and PhD: 1000–1250

Due: Tuesday, October 8, by 4:00 p.m., at the beginning of the class. Submit the paper in hard copy at the beginning of class on the day. Post your video by the beginning of class. A separate Padlet will be available for the video reflections. Respond to two other student video posts by Friday, October 11.

**3. Final Paper or Project and Summary Presentation 40%.** Due: Tuesday, December 3, at the beginning of class. All final assignments are due on this day, although presentations may be on either Tuesday December 3 or Tuesday December 10, to be determined closer to the day, and dependent on class size. **20%** of the mark for this final assignment comprises your own presentation and your thoughtful interaction with other students' presentations. Provision will be made for written responses to be made after the presentations (online) if there is not enough time in-class. This will be determined on the basis of class size, closer to the time.

Final Paper or Project Proposed Topics and Plans: Each student **must** be in conversation with me (in person or by email) about your proposed paper or project prior to embarking on your work for this final assignment. Have this conversation with me **prior** to Week 7, Tuesday October 29. On that face-to-face class day, October 29, be prepared to share with the rest of the class what you are planning to do for your final assignment (e.g. whether you are embarking on a paper or a project, and what you will explore). You may choose a deeper study or creative exploration of any practice that we explore in the class, or any other practice of faith that is of interest and relevance to you. You may want to participate in one of these practices throughout the semester by leading a group or reflecting on lived practice. In this case, you should be in touch with me prior to the beginning of the course or within the first week or two. I am interested in helping you to fulfill personal goals and desires with this final assignment and invite you to find creative ways of doing this, as well as taking some personal risk in doing so.

Word Length for Final Papers:

MTS and MDiv: 3000 words

DPT and PhD: 7000–9000 words

Reflection Component: All final assignments require either an embedded or an additional component of personal reflection on what you learned through the process of doing this final assignment. Plan to devote at least 750–1000 words for this piece. It can be above the word count for your final paper, or you can embed it as the final segment of your paper. Give it a title that makes it clear that this is what it is, such as “My Personal Reflection on Learning” or “What I Learned” or something that distinguishes it as this reflection-on-learning segment. Write it from your own personal perspective, regardless of the nature of your assignment—that is, even if you choose a formal academic paper, you will still write this segment from a personal point of view.

Risk Factor: Please consider taking some kind of personal risk in your work for this final assignment, whatever kind of qualified risk would be valuable for your own growth and development. It may be a creative risk, a risk in vulnerability, etc. Include something about the kind of risk that you chose to take in your reflection on this assignment.

Due Date and Late Penalties: Please be in touch with me well in advance of the due date (Tuesday, Dec 3) if there is *any problem* – physical health, death in the family, other crises, mental health, etc. Also, if you are struggling with your assignment, please be in touch with me in advance. If you have not been in touch with me in advance, the penalty for late final assignments will be 2% per day late, with a maximum of 5 days late. After that, the final assignment may not be accepted for completion of the course. I am approachable and reasonable, and I will do everything possible to help you succeed in this course, so please *be in touch early* if there is any issue in getting your work done in a timely manner.

### Textbook Purchase

All required textbooks for this class are available from the College's book service, READ On Bookstore, Room 145, McMaster Divinity College. Texts may be purchased on the first day of class. For advance purchase, you may contact READ On Bookstore, 5 International Blvd, Etobicoke, Ontario M9W 6H3: phone 416.620.2934; fax 416.622.2308; email [books@readon.ca](mailto:books@readon.ca). Other book services may also carry the texts.

### 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 ~ <https://mcmasterdivinity.ca/rules-regulations/>

### Gender Inclusive Language

McMaster Divinity College uses inclusive language for human beings in worship services, student written materials, and all its publications. It is expected that inclusive language will be used in chapel services and all MDC assignments. In reference to biblical texts, the integrity of the original expressions and the names of God should be respected, but you will need to use gender-inclusive language for humans, and you will need to quote from a gender-inclusive version such as the following: NRSV (1989), NCV (1991), TEV/GNB/GNT (1992), CEV (1995), NLT (1996), TNIV (2005), and the Common English Bible (CEB 2011).

### Style

All stylistic considerations (including but not limited to questions of formatting, footnotes, and bibliographic references) must conform to the McMaster Divinity College Style Guidelines for Essays and Theses <http://mcmasterdivinity.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/mdcstyleguide.pdf>. Failure to observe appropriate form will result in grade reductions.

### 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 to and including the first day of class.