



# McMaster Divinity College

## **Advanced Research in Practical Theology MS 5YC5 Hybrid DPT Course Winter 2023**

Dr. Lee Beach [beachl@mcmaster.ca](mailto:beachl@mcmaster.ca)  
Office # 237

Class begins Online January 12th. We will meet as a class via Zoom on Thursday Jan. 12 at 11:00 am -12:50 pm EST. The class will also meet via Zoom on Thursday Feb. 2 and 16 @ 11:00 am – 12:00 pm EST (both sessions optional) and Thursday Feb. 23 @ 11:00 am – 12:50 pm EST (NOT optional). We will meet on campus and/or via online streaming March 1 (9:30 - 4:00 ET) and Mar. 2 (9:30 – 1:00 ET). Opportunity for online consultation with the instructor will also be available the week of Mar. 20<sup>th</sup>.

### **Instructor Biography**

Dr. Lee Beach is the Associate Professor of Christian Ministry, the Garbutt F. Smith Chair in Ministry Formation and the Director of Ministry Formation at McMaster Divinity College in Hamilton, Ontario. He teaches courses on the church in culture, pastoral ministry and Christian spirituality. Prior to coming to MDC Lee pastored for over 20 years with the Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada serving churches in Peterborough, Cobourg and Scarborough, Ontario. He currently participates in Ancaster Village Church in Ancaster, Ontario where he lives with his family. He is the author of the book, *The Church in Exile: Living in Hope after Christendom* (IVP) and co-author (With Dr. Franklin Pyles) of the book *The Whole Gospel for the Whole World: Experiencing the Four-Fold Gospel Today* (Wipf and Stock).

### **Course Description**

The past twenty years has witnessed a significant increase in academic research in the field of *Practical Theology*. The growth of this literature is a significant indicator of the emerging intellectual 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 its practices. However, the widely-felt need for expanding the nucleus of academic literature to support the theoretical interests of practical theology represent a new development in the field. This course is a call for constructive imagination and humility in approaching the great questions that emerge from what Edward Farley calls, “the ecclesial existence and the constitutive activities” of the church in the world. The course seeks to draw widely from various thinkers who have helped to shape the current (often contested) direction of *Practical Theology*. 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.

## **Learning Goals:**

### **Knowing**

1. To identify and engage with key theorists in the field of practical theology.
2. To interpret current literature that supports academic research in the field of practical theology.
3. To understand the framework for practice-led research.

### **Being**

1. To discern the personal trajectory of one’s own life and ongoing contribution to research concerning the mission of the church in the world.
2. To deepen one’s concern for the intellectual life of the 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 locate oneself in the field of practical theology and to determine possible paths for ongoing research.
3. To join a relevant academic society related to one’s chosen area of focus in practical theology.

## **Working together as a learning community**

A core value of our class is that it is a “learning community,” designed to be a place where each member of the community can grow through positive affirmation and constructive input. We should all come to the community as people in process, open to be deconstructed and formed through our mutual learning experience.

As a responsible member of our learning community, you will be expected to commit yourself to the class throughout the semester that we are together. This means that in our class interactions you will endeavor to treat all members of our class with respect and dignity. Your presence is necessary for our community (that is our class) to function at an optimal level, therefore it is expected that each student will be “present” in the online aspect of the course and in attendance for the face-to-face aspect of the course Mar. 1-2 (either in person or via live stream). Specific expectations for online interaction can be found in the “assignments” and

“course schedule” sections of this syllabus (below). Assignments should be handed in on time and in good order as an attachment to an email to the professor. Assignments should be sent in on or before the due date specified in this syllabus. All assignments handed in after the due date may be subject to a penalty of 3% for each day (including weekends) that they are late.

### **Instructor’s role and availability**

As professor it is my responsibility to empower each class member as a learner by treating each student with respect and dignity. I come to position myself as a fellow learner in the community and to offer information, reflection, experience, and questions for us to reflect on together. Further, it is my responsibility to give good evaluation and feedback to your thinking, both as you offer it to the class in our discussions and through written work so that your growth through this class can be maximized as a result of our collaboration.

I will do my best to answer any email enquiries within 24 hours during weekdays (Mon.-Fri). I do not generally answer emails Saturdays or Sunday. If an email is sent later in the afternoon on a Friday it will probably not be answered until Sunday evening or Monday morning. I will do my very best to grade assignments within three weeks of submission.

I am not only available but also welcome and enjoy connections with each of you outside class time. If you would like to meet together in person or via zoom please feel free to make an appointment with me for a time that works for both of us.

### **Required Reading**

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

Cahalen, Kathleen A. and Mikoski, Gordon S., eds. *Opening the Field of Practical Theology: An Introduction*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2014.

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

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.

Swinton, John and Harriet Mowat. *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*. London: SCM Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 2016.

Velting, Terry A. *Practical Theology: ‘On Earth as It is in Heaven’*. New York: Maryknoll Press, 2005.

Ward, Pete. *Introducing Practical Theology: Mission, Ministry and the Life of the Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2017.

## ASSIGNMENTS

### 1. Paper and Presentation: Locating Myself as a Practical Theologian

Students will write a paper that seeks to describe where they would locate themselves in the field of Practical Theology (PT). The paper should include an autobiographical sketch of previous life and spiritual experience that reflects on your religious tradition, educational and professional background, and evolution in your theological and spiritual journey. How has God been working in and shaping you personally, professionally, and theologically? The paper should then move to where you see yourself on the landscape of PT and what kind of contribution you want to make to the discipline of PT and to the ongoing mission of the church. The paper is part self-reflection and part interaction with the field of PT. Your paper should offer a sincere and thoughtful reflection on your own spiritual, professional and theological journey as well as a beginning knowledge of the field of PT and where you see yourself located in the field. The paper should include reference to at least 7 sources (course texts and/or other books and articles).

The paper will also form the basis of a class presentation. The presentation will occur during our face to face time Mar. 1-2 (a schedule will be developed and finalized within the first two weeks of the course). The presentation should be ten minutes in length with a five minute Q+A to follow.

**The paper should be 3000 words (double spaced) and is due Feb 6, 2023, as an email attachment sent to the course instructor. This assignment will constitute 30% of the course grade.**

### 2. Paper and Presentation: Methods in Practical Theology

Each Student will be assigned one of the essays or (methods) from part II of the textbook *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology* to reflect on and offer a 750 - 1000-word summary of the assigned method. The student will also provide a brief (no more than 10 minute) video presentation of their method for the class to view.

For the written component, please read your assigned method for general familiarity and provide an executive summary that captures the key components, philosophical foundations, and practical considerations of the method you are studying. Methods will be assigned during the first week of class.

The written aspect of the assignment will also form the foundation for the verbal presentation. This presentation should be taped on whatever platform is most familiar to you as long as you can provide a link for viewing (if you are not sure how to do this please consult with the instructor for help). The presentation should not be longer than 10 minutes (overtime presentations will affect grading) and should provide your classmates with a clear and helpful summary of the method you have been studying. The link to the presentation will be sent via. email to the instructor and he will post it on our A2L course site.

Presentations will be graded according to clarity, insight into the method, creativity in presentation and timing.

A threaded discussion of presentations will be created on our class A2L site. Students will be expected to view all of the presentations and respond to at least two of their classmates' presentations. Responses should be 200 -250 words and should offer a thoughtful response to the presentation including an evaluation of the overall content, any other information that could/should be included in a summary of the specific method and any questions that you continue to have about the method. Your post is due by midnight February 24, 2023.

The goal of this assignment is to help familiarize you with the various methodological possibilities that are available for research in Practical Theology.

**This assignment (both the written and video portions) is due Feb. 17, 2023. The paper should be 750 words in length (double spaced) and the presentation no more than ten minutes in length. The paper will constitute 10% of the course grade and the presentation will also constitute 10% of the course grade.**

### **3. Final Paper: Literature Review**

Students will write a literature review paper that is germane to their dissertation topic. A literature review is a comprehensive summary of previous research on a topic. The literature review should offer a survey of scholarly articles, books, and other potential sources relevant to a particular area of research. The review not only highlights key resources but offers an analysis of their helpfulness to the researchers own work. This paper should offer reflection on at least fifteen (15) sources that could have relevance to your overall dissertation project. It should offer a brief introduction to your topic, proceed to the review of existing literature on the topic and conclude with some thoughts on how your own research will contribute something new to the field.

**This assignment should be 6000 words (double spaced) and is due Thursday, Apr. 6, 2023. It will constitute 35% of the course grade.**

### **4. Participation**

As a doctoral level course, it is expected that students will make engagement with peers a high priority in their learning. As an online/hybrid class this kind of commitment to participation is absolutely essential to the ethos and overall quality of the course. Thus, students will be graded on their participation based on the quality and frequency of their online participation.

**Class participation will constitute 15% of the course grade. Grades will be determined using the rubric provided in the appendix to this syllabus (see below).**

## **COURSE OUTLINE**

### **Module 1, Week of January 9th**

#### **Theme: On Becoming a Practical Theologian**

#### **Synchronous Zoom Introductions Thursday, January 12<sup>th</sup> 11: 00 am -12:50 pm EST**

Join the Zoom discussion and give us a brief introduction to who you are and what it means for you to become a practical theologian. We will review the syllabus and go over course requirements. A brief lecture/discussion on the topic of “Becoming a Practical Theologian” will also be offered.

**Read:** 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.

Kathleen A. Cahalan and James R. Nieman, “Mapping the Field of Practical Theology” in *For Life Abundant*, Dorothy C. Bass and Craig Dykstra, eds., 62-85.

### **Module 2, Weeks of January 16 and 23**

#### **Theme: The Field and Nature of Practical Theology**

**Review** the online lecture that will be posted on our course A2L site.

**Read:** John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 2016, Part I, Theoretical Foundations, 3-94.

Kathleen A. Cahalan and Gordon S. Mikoski., eds. *Opening the Field of Practical Theology*.

Edward Farley, “Interpreting Situations”, in *Formation and Reflection*, Lewis S. Mudge and James N. Poling, eds., 1-26.

#### **Online Threaded Discussion**

Post to the course at Avenue to Learn a 250-300 word summary of insights gained with respect to the field of practical theology. How is your understanding being shaped? What clarifications have you made? What definitions of practical theology are you encountering in your reading? What is the confluence and dissonance that you are noticing? What is your own emerging definition of the field of practical theology? What new questions are being provoked? Your post is due by midnight January 28, 2023.

### **Module 3, Week of January 30<sup>th</sup> Envisioning Practical Theology**

**Review** online course lecture

**Read:** 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*,  
a. *Part I*, “Envisioning Practical Theology”, 2008, 1-61; and  
b. ONE chapter of *Part II* – either Chapter 4, 5, 6, or 7. \*\*Choose the practice that is most aligned with your own research practice interest: ministry integration (Chapter 4), worship (Chapter 5), ritual/liturgy (Chapter 6) or pedagogy (Chapter 7).

**Optional Class Meeting February 2, 11:00 am – 12:00 pm EST.** This gathering is for discussion on course material up to this point. It is completely optional but the instructor will be available and prepared to lead a discussion and respond to questions on readings and lectures thus far.

**Assignment Due:** Submit your paper “Locating Myself in the Field of Practical Theology” as an email attachment to the instructor on or before Monday, Feb. 6, 2023 (see “assignments” section of this syllabus for a description of this assignment).

### **Module 4, Week of February 6 and 13<sup>th</sup>. Method in Practical Theology**

**Review** online lecture

**Read:**

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

McNamara, Andrew, “Six Rules for Practice-led Research.” *Journal of Writing and Writing Courses 14 (Special Issue): 1-15* online:

<http://www.textjournal.com.au/speciss/issue14/McNamara.pdf>

Carole Gray “From the Ground Up: Encountering Theory in the Process of Practiced 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>

Carole Gray, "Inquiry Through Practice: Developing Appropriate Research Strategies", 1996, in P. Korvenmaa (ed.) *No Guru, No Method? Conference Proceedings*, Research Institute, University of Art and Design. Online: <http://carolegray.net/Papers/PDFs/ngnm.pdf>

**Optional Class Meeting February 16, 11:00 am – 12:00 pm EST.** This gathering is for discussion on course material up to this point, especially as it pertains to PLR. It is completely optional but the instructor will be available and prepared to lead a discussion and respond to questions on readings and lectures thus far.

**Assignment Due:** Submit your executive summary of the method you have been assigned as an email attachment to the instructor on or before Friday, Feb. 17<sup>th</sup>. Record your presentation of the method and submit a viewing link to the instructor on or before Feb. 17<sup>th</sup> (see "assignments" section of this syllabus for a description of this assignment).

## **Module 5, Week of February 20, 2023**

### **Class Gathering: Feb. 23, 11:00 am -12:50 p.m. EST Synchronous Class Session (zoom): Practical Theology as Theology**

We will meet as a class for this online session that will be a discussion on the methodologies that we have been studying the previous two weeks as well as a lecture/discussion on the topics of practice as research, action reflection models and PT and Practical Theology as Theology.

**Online threaded discussion:** View your classmates video presentations on methods in PT and post responses to at least two of them on the course site at Avenue to Learn. Responses should be 200 -250 words and should offer a thoughtful response to the presentation including an evaluation of the overall content, any other information that could/should be included in a summary of the specific method and any questions that you continue to have about the method. Your post is due by midnight February 24, 2023.

## **Module 6, Week of February 27**

### **In-Person Course Time**

**March 1 Wednesday 9:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.**

**March 2 Thursday 9:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.**

Topics for the in person gatherings will include:

- Profiles in Practical Theology (Becoming a Practical Theologian)
- Student presentations of their "locating myself" paper
- Further discussion and consideration of methodology in research



## Developing your research agenda

**\*\*\*There will be no new material or reading the week of March 6\*\*\***

### **Modules 7, 8 &9: Approaches to Practical Theology**

#### **Module 7 Week of March 13**

**Book Study:** Terry A. Veling, *Practical Theology: 'On Earth as It is in Heaven'*, 2005, 3-244.

*"All this to say that we live in the world as interpreters of the word, that we are always interpreting ourselves and the world around us, that to be human is to be an interpreter of life in all its rich distinctions and variations. The art of interpretation is a fundamental condition of human existence."*-Veling, *Practical Theology*, 23.

**Online Threaded Discussion:** Post a response to the book that offers a short summary of the overall approach to PT offered by the author including two or three key insights that you received as a result of reading it. Post your response on the course site at Avenue to Learn. Responses should be 250 -300 words. Your post is due by midnight March 17, 2023.

#### **Module 8 Week of March 20**

**Book Study:** Pete Ward, *Introducing Practical Theology: Mission, Ministry and the Life of the Church*, 2017, 1-188.

*"Practical theology has a purpose and a reason; it is meant to produce something. It is mistaken to see the main product or result of practical theology as primarily an academic paper, a thesis, or even a book. Practical theology is not just a class taken as training for ministry; it is about changed lives. So the purpose and eventual product of practical theology should be the transformation of individuals and communities."* Ward, *Practical Theology*, 167.

**Online Threaded Discussion:** Post a response to the book that offers a short summary of the overall approach to PT offered by the author including two or three key insights that you received as a result of reading it. Post your response on the course site at Avenue to Learn. Responses should be 250 -300 words. Your post is due by midnight March 24, 2023.

**Optional Consultations this week:** Sign up for a Personal 20 min. Zoom consultation with Dr. Beach – by appointment. If you would like to book a consultation to discuss your final paper or anything else related to the course please email the professor to secure a time that works for both of us.

## Module 9 Week of March 27

**Book Study:** 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.

**Online Threaded Discussion:** Post a response to the book that offers a short summary of the overall approach to PT offered by the author including two or three key insights that you received as a result of reading it. Post your response on the course site at Avenue to Learn. Responses should be 250 -300 words. Your post is due by midnight March 31, 2023.

## Module 10 Week of April 3

Theme: Servant Scholarship for the Church

**Review** the online lecture

**Assignment Due:** Submit your final paper on or before Thursday, Apr. 6<sup>th</sup>. (see “assignments” section of this syllabus for a description of this assignment).

### Additional notes:

#### A. Textbook Purchase

All required textbooks for this class are available from the College’s book service, READ On Bookstore you may contact READ On Bookstore, at books@readon.ca. Other book services may also carry the texts.

#### B. 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/>

#### C. 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).

#### D. 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.

### **Appendix One: Participation Rubric**

#### A-LEVEL PARTICIPATION (9-10 Points)

- The participant integrated evidence from the reading, lecture, or past experience in supporting their argument.
- The participant consistently posted insightful comments and questions that prompted on topic discussion.
- The participant consistently helped clarify or synthesize other class members' ideas. If disagreeing with other class members' ideas, the participant stated his or her disagreement or objections clearly, yet politely.

#### B-LEVEL PARTICIPATION (8 Points)

- The participant was notably lacking in one or two of the items listed for A-level participation.
- The participant consistently had to be prompted or coaxed to participate.
- The participant usually, but not always, expressed herself or himself clearly.

#### C-LEVEL PARTICIPATION (7 Points)

- The participant was consistently lacking in two or more of the items listed for A-level participation.

- The participant was extremely reluctant to participate, even when prompted.
- The participant rarely expressed himself or herself clearly.

#### D-LEVEL PARTICIPATION (6 Points)

- The participant frequently attempted (success is irrelevant) to draw the discussion off-topic, even if the participant's participation otherwise conforms to a higher level on the rubric

#### F-LEVEL PARTICIPATION (0-5 Points)

- The participant was rude or abusive to other course participants.
- The participant consistently failed or refused to participate at all, even when specifically prompted or questioned, even if the participant's participation otherwise conforms to a higher level on the rubric.

### **Appendix Two: Bibliography**

Alsop, Wendy Horger. *Practical Theology for Women: How Knowing God Makes a Difference in Our Daily Lives*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008.

Alves, Rubem A. *The Poet, the Warrior, the Prophet*. London: SCM, 2002.

Ammerman, Nancy Tatom, et al. *Congregation & Community*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1997.

Ammerman, Nancy T., et al., eds. *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1998.

Anderson, Herbert, and Edward Foley. *Mighty Stories, Dangerous Rituals: Weaving Together the Human and the Divine*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2001.

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