



**ERSKINE**  
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

*For Christ and His Church*

## CO 607 Basic Counseling



Spring 2011, Thursdays from 1-4 P.M. beginning Feb. 3<sup>rd</sup>  
Due West Campus

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### **Course Description**

This course seeks to equip the pastor and teacher with basic skills needed for counseling parishioners in the local church. Attention is devoted to understanding the dynamics of the counseling process, adopting a Biblical view of human needs, and applying appropriate skills for helping those in need. *M.A.C.M. students may not take this course. Required for M.Div. students. Three hours.*

### **Course Objectives**

The mission of Erskine Theological Seminary (ETS) is to educate persons for service in the Christian Church in faithfulness to the Bible, the Reformed tradition, and the standards of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church while showing respect for denominational diversity. One of the Seminary's goals is that graduates will be prepared to understand and minister to people and communities through pastoral care and counseling. This course seeks to improve the counselor's understanding of personal development so that appropriate implications for counseling of persons might be developed and implemented. By the conclusion of this course it is hoped that each student will have made progress in:

1. understanding the fundamental differences, and similarities, between secular and Biblical approaches to counseling;
2. being able to see, assess, and counsel people from a Biblical perspective in a manner that is respectful and helpful to the person, and that brings glory to God;

3. developing and improving one's use of the basic skills of personal counseling: and,
4. growing in one's self-understanding as a person in need of God's grace and guidance in order to be a person of Godly character and integrity.

**Required Texts (2)** (*The Holy Bible is assumed as a required text in all classes*)

Students are expected to secure their own copies of all required textbooks. The Erskine Campus Bookstore will carry a limited number of copies of every required text and orders for books can be placed through the Campus Bookstore. The seminary also has a bookstore portal on its website at <http://www.erskineseminary.org/bookstore.html>. Here you will find links to familiar vendors and can check availability of texts, compare prices, and place orders. While students may order their books from any source, orders placed with the vendors listed, **through the seminary's web site**, earn a small rebate, a percentage of which goes to benefit the Seminary's Student Body Association.

Capps, Donald. *Giving Counsel: A Minister's Guidebook*. St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2001. ISBN-13: 978-0827212473

Powlison, David. *Seeing with New Eyes: Counseling and the Human Condition through the Lens of Scripture*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2003. ISBN-13: 978-0875526089.

Vernick, Leslie. *How to Act Right When Your Spouse Acts Wrong*. Colorado Springs, CO: WaterBrook Press, 2009. ISBN-13: 978-0307458490

**Course Requirements & Expectations**

**Attendance:** Your presence at, preparation for, and participation in all class sessions is assumed for a passing grade. Each student, therefore, is expected to arrive on time, including following class breaks, and to attend all class meetings for their duration. In the event that an absence is necessary—for whatever reason, including pastoral duties, work, or family responsibilities—the student is responsible for all assignments and all work done in class. Absences in excess of three (3) hours, may limit one's final grade to no higher than a "B." Absences in excess of seven (7) hours will result in receiving no credit for the course. Any student who misses seven or more cumulative hours of class should consult with the professor and then contact the registrar, in writing, and withdraw from the course, rather than fail it. Students who miss more than three hours of class are required to do extra work and are expected to take the initiative to secure the assignments from the professor. Failure to complete extra work by the final day of class or the exam date will result in the reduction of one's final course grade by one full letter grade or more.

**Assignments:**

- ✓ All work submitted **MUST** be fresh, new work produced in the current semester, not re-cycled work or work submitted for another class or produced in whole or in part by another person.
- ✓ All assignments are due on the designated date. An absence does not negate this requirement unless prior arrangements have been made. Late work will be accepted

- after the assignment is due but will receive a minimum penalty of one letter grade per week.
- ✓ All make-up work is due by the last day of class or by the exam date (if an exam is scheduled).
  - ✓ Written work should conform to the standards in the “Style and Form Standards for All Masters Level Programs” (Erskine Seminary) and Kate L. Turabian, *A Guide for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 5th ed. or later. Essential guidelines to assist in formatting papers are available from the professor. Do NOT submit work in folders; simply supply a cover/title sheet (include your name!) and staple pages (numbered!) together.\
  - ✓ When submitting papers electronically, you MUST:
    - Name/save the document file as follows: Your Name – Assignment Name – PM607 – SP-11
    - Attach to an email as a Word document (.doc)
  - ✓ Give careful attention to spelling, grammar, syntax, style, and form; these items are considered in grading.
  - ✓ Proofread all papers before submission!!
  - ✓ At the professor’s invitation alone, permission **may** be granted for one below average paper (< C) to be re-done one time to improve one’s grade (limited to a maximum of a "B-"). This option does not exist for any papers turned in the final day of class.

### **Guidelines/Requirements for Assignments:**

- 1) "My New Eyes" Report - Before beginning to read Powlison's *Seeing with New Eyes*, ask God to show you at least one important insight or learning from each chapter (including the Preface, Introduction, and Conclusion) that He would have you know, understand, and use in your life and ministry. Then, after carefully and prayerfully reading the text, write a double-spaced essay in which you very succinctly describe the most important insight that God brought to your attention from each chapter in the book. While the descriptions are to be brief and to the point, do give sufficient information that will explain **why** that particular learning is important to you. The language of personal pronouns (i.e., I, me, my, etc.) is to be used in your essay since you will be discussing your life and ministry. The 10-15 page essay should be double-spaced using a font size and style similar to that found in this syllabus which is Times New Roman, 12-point. **BEWARE: Do not string a number of quotes together or simply summarize the chapters. If you do so, you will receive a failing grade on the assignment with no opportunity to re-do the assignment!!**
- 2) "How to Act Right" Report - Before beginning to read Vernick’s book, ask God to show you at least one important insight or learning from each chapter (including the Introduction) that He would have you know, understand, and use in your life and ministry. Then, after carefully and prayerfully reading the text, first prepare an outline of Vernick’s basic model of counseling that could be used as a short-hand reference in one’s future marital counseling work. Then, very succinctly describe

the most important insight or quote that God brought to your attention from each chapter, and explain why that particular learning is important to you. The language of personal pronouns (i.e., I, me, my, etc.) is to be used in the essay portions since you will be discussing your life and ministry. The paper should be **single-spaced** using a font size and style similar to that found in this syllabus which is Times New Roman, 12-point.

- 3) Giving Counsel Report - Before beginning to read Capps' *Giving Counsel*, ask God to show you at least one important insight or learning from each chapter (including the Introduction and A Final Word) that He would have you know, understand, and use in your life and ministry. Then, after carefully and prayerfully reading the text, first prepare a detailed **outline/annotation** of each chapter that could be used as a short-hand reference in one's future counseling work. Then, at the end of each chapter outline, add a paragraph in which you very succinctly describe the most important insight or two that God brought to your attention from that chapter, and explain why that particular learning is important to you. The language of personal pronouns (i.e., I, me, my, etc.) is to be used in the essay portions since you will be discussing your life and ministry. The paper should be **single-spaced** using a font size and style similar to that found in this syllabus which is Times New Roman, 12-point.
- 4) Counseling Skills Demonstration & In-class Assignments- Working both in assigned small groups as well as the larger classroom setting, students will demonstrate their progress in acquiring and honing some of the basic counseling skills including listening skills, accurate empathy, appropriate responses, proper boundary setting, assessment, etc. In-class assignments may include brief writing assignments to be completed in class, as well as brief assignments (research, reflections) to be submitted in a subsequent class.
- 5) Verbatims – Each student will prepare up two verbatims for in-class, peer review and submission to the professor. Verbatims should conform to the guidelines provided in this syllabus.
- 6) Final Exam - A cumulative exam will be administered covering the lecture material and skill development.

### **Course Grading**

Regular attendance and appropriate, active participation in class are assumed for a passing grade. The absence of regular attendance and active participation will affect one's final grade. Otherwise, the final grade will be calculated on the standard seminary scale as follows:

Reports (20% each), Skill Demonstration & Verbatims, and Final Exam - 20% each

### **Class Schedule**

Feb. 3 – No Class – out of town attending ESDC meeting; work on verbatim

Feb. 10 – First Class - **Verbatim #1 Due**  
 Feb. 17  
 Feb. 24 – **Powlison Report Due**  
 Mar. 3  
 Mar. 10  
 Mar. 17 – **Vernick Report Due**  
 Mar. 24  
 Mar. 31  
 Apr. 7 – **Capps Report Due**  
 Apr. 14  
 Apr. 21 – Holy Week & Spring Break (Seminary)  
 Apr. 28 – **Verbatim #2 Due**  
 May 5 – Final Class  
 May 11 – **Final Exam** – Wednesday afternoon (note that this is a day earlier than class normally meets)

### **Seminary Policies**

**Drop/Add/ and Course Withdrawal:** Once a student has completed, signed, and submitted his/her registration to the Registrar for this class, it is a binding contract, and billing will be based on this registration. If the student decides not to take this class, he/she must complete a “drop/add” form and secure the appropriate signatures prior to the drop/add deadline during the second week of the semester or term. If one wishes to withdraw from the course after the drop/add deadline, one must complete a withdrawal form, and tuition will be refunded on a pro rated basis. Failure to withdraw from the class properly will result in the student’s receiving a grade of “F” for the course, and full tuition charges will apply. No exceptions will be made to this policy.

### **Office Hours**

My normal office hours are printed in this syllabus. However, due to meetings and unforeseen circumstances that may arise, my schedule may change. If you need to see me, I strongly recommend that you call or e-mail to schedule an appointment.

### **Language about God and Humanity**

Although God transcends the distinction between male and female, the Bible and the Church’s historic creeds and confessions use masculine language in reference to God. Thus, the Seminary encourages all students to retain this masculine usage when speaking and writing about God. Furthermore, the Seminary recognizes that all human beings, male and female, are created equally in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-27), and believers of both sexes are fellow heirs of the grace of life (1 Pet. 3:7). Accordingly, whenever students are speaking and writing about males and females, they should use language that clearly includes both men and women (for example, by saying/writing "humanity" rather than "man" or "people" rather than "men").

### **Conduct in Theological Discussions**

Erskine Seminary is committed to the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church, and it expects its students to show respect for all who identify with that one Church. In all written work, oral presentations, and discussions both inside and outside the classroom,

the Seminary expects students to conduct discussions of controversial issues in a context of respect for those with whom one disagrees. Please see the Community Life Statement in the Catalog for more information.

### **Incompletes**

The grade of "I" or incomplete is given at the discretion of the professor. A grade of "I" is normally given when a student has substantially completed the requirements for a course but has been prevented by extraordinary circumstances from completing the remainder of the course requirements. A student who wishes to request an incomplete should normally complete an incomplete form prior to the end of the semester and ask the professor to grant the request. (Under unusual circumstances, the student may communicate with the professor by phone or email rather than in person, and the professor may then agree to fill out the form at the student's request. Under exceptional circumstances, the professor may initiate the process by filling out the form on the student's behalf.) If the professor grants the request, he/she will sign the incomplete form and turn it in with his/her final grade report. An "I" in any course must be removed by March 1 for the Fall Term, April 1 for the January Term, August 1 for the Spring Term, and November 1 for the Summer Term. Only the Dean may grant extensions of incompletes beyond the established completion date. Otherwise, these grades automatically become "F."

### **Chapel Attendance Policy**

All morning and afternoon on-campus classes (except for Friday and Saturday courses) carry a chapel attendance requirement. Consult the catalog or bulletin board for the specifics of the chapel attendance policy. There is a per chapel fee if you attend fewer chapels than required.

### **Guidelines for Verbatim Reports**

A verbatim report is a method by which the student attempts to record the essential elements of the ministry event and relationship as remembered. *It is understood that the student will not be able to record the conversation with perfect recall. The way the event is remembered, however, is often more important for ministry learning than having the accurate transcript.* Also, the verbatim's effectiveness and usefulness as a learning tool is not predicated upon the complexity of the particular ministry event. Significant learnings can be gleaned from even the most "simple and casual" of conversations between pastor and parishioner.

A verbatim generally will be approximately five pages in length. All prayers should be written out in full. Verbatims are to be written in such a manner as to protect and ensure the confidentiality of the persons involved in the ministry event, and should display the following heading: "Confidential Ministry Report." Example:

Confidential Counseling Report  
 A Verbatim Record – Session with "Bob" (use pseudonym or initials)  
 John Arp, Counselor, First Church, Atlanta, March 10, 2006

***The following five (5) elements then are given in the order presented below (be sure to attend to each part carefully):***

I. Introduction – brief, factual information known to the student about the person(s) receiving ministry; pertinent situational data; appropriate process or relationship development data; preliminary ministry goals (when the event has been planned); the student's own "state of being" (frame of mind and heart); and, a brief situational and process comment as the counseling event begins. NOTE: the focus is upon the counselor's skill development as well as upon how the counselee's concern is addressed.

II. Interpersonal Exchange – a transcript from the student's memory of what was communicated by the counselor and the counselee(s). An adequate verbatim usually includes 15-20 exchanges. Each person's communication is designated by an identifying letter, sequential numbering of subsequent responses, and double-spacing between the single-spaced statements of each person. Example:

M1 Good Morning, Bob. I was in the area and thought I'd drop by for a few minutes and see how that new job is coming along?

B1 (looking tearful, voice quivering) Not so good.

M2 Oh? What's wrong? [My stomach begins to tighten]

B2 (begins to sob) I failed my physical that they required . . . .

M3 Now, now, Bob, it's not so bad. You need to just look on the bright side! Why, I remember when I . . .

Continue in the same fashion, numbering responses for ease of reference when reviewing the verbatim. Comments concerning words spoken, feelings felt or perceived, actions described, and situational happenings should be given in brackets or parentheses.

III. Reflections – the student's own identification of: personal feelings; the process of the counseling event; theory and skill utilization evident; and an estimate of the counselee's specific need(s) for ministry. Attention also should be given to counselor identity, authority, and role as well as a careful and detailed report of the theological dimensions of the counseling event. Reflections are different from evaluations!

IV. Evaluation – the student's own written assessment of counseling skill and awareness of counseling dynamics (strengths and weaknesses) related to process, skills, theory, theological dimensions, etc. Primary attention is to be devoted to the student's

perception of his/her own evident strengths and growing edges as a counselor; what you would do differently next time, etc. References to specific interactions should be given (B1, M4, etc).

- V. Future Counseling Goal(s) – the student’s plan for how he/she will counsel with the person(s) involved in this verbatim in future contacts; or, if no future contact is anticipated, what one learned from this encounter that will be of benefit to the counselor in future counseling endeavors. Includes things about which the student will be internally aware as well as observable actions.

Reflections, evaluations, & future counseling goals should be listed succinctly and numerically. Note carefully the distinction between reflections on the event and one’s evaluation of oneself in the event. For example:

#### Reflections

1. I’m glad I went to see him today.
2. I was very preoccupied with his grief over his father and was shocked about the news of his own impending death.
3. Bob is nearly as old as my father. I really feel anxious and awkward trying to be his counselor. Anxious, because of my fear of my father’s death some day and awkward because I feel like a kid telling his parent what to do.
4. I seemed to focus more on trying to "fix" things than really hearing his grief. Makes me wonder if I am afraid of my own grief.

#### Evaluations

1. I was very anxious, but I displayed an adequate "non-anxious presence" in asking Bob about his new job.
2. I "took control" of the conversation at P5, and failed to really hear what Bob was trying to convey regarding his fears.
3. My effort to avoid triangulation over the custody issue at P15 seemed to be effective.
4. I missed an opportunity at P10 to respond to his concerns for his family.
5. My attempt to introduce prayer seemed clumsy and ill-timed; I seem to have trouble knowing how to end a counseling session well.

#### Future Counseling Goals (what one plans to do/say/be in future contacts):

1. I will ask him if he would like for me to pray rather than assuming that it is OK.
2. I will make a conscious effort to maintain eye contact especially when I feel uneasy.
3. I will explore theological themes rather than avoiding them.

—End of Verbatim Guidelines—