

Erskine Theological Seminary

DR 902

**The Practice of Ministry (formerly Acts of Ministry)
Fall, 2008**

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I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this seminar, students examine the practice of ministry through the Church in the world, in light of the theological foundations of ministry. Special emphasis is given to the careful study of one's ministry context, planning and implementing ministry, conducting research in ministry, and evaluating effectiveness in ministry.

(tentative)

REQUIRED. Three hours credit.

II. COURSE OBJECTIVES

The Seminary Mission Statement affirms that "The mission of Erskine Theological Seminary is to educate persons for service in the Christian Church." (*ETS 2007-08 Catalogue*, p. 5) The focus in this course is on enabling Doctor of Ministry students to engage in this ministry with more intentionality and with discernment as to how the minister, God, the church, and the world are involved in specific acts of ministry. Furthermore, the emphasis on evaluating effectiveness in ministry can help the student be a more responsible steward of what God has entrusted to him/her. A course like this which centers in attempting to discern what God is doing in a ministry setting and which seeks to sharpen skills in bringing about responsible stewardship is a clear expression of the Seminary's Mission Statement.

More specifically, by the end of this course, the student should be able to:

Christian Commitment and Excellence in Learning

1. Demonstrate the use of critical thinking skills in analyzing concrete acts of ministry in his/her ministry setting;
2. Describe basic types of research that are appropriate for Christian ministry;
3. Define what is meant by the ecology of a congregation/ministry setting;
4. Summarize specific ways by which one discovers the culture and identity of a congregation/ministry setting;
5. Define what is meant by process in a congregation/ministry setting and describe specific signs that show when process is broken;
6. Describe the various resources a congregation/ministry setting possesses;
7. Explain each element of the basic design of a congregational/ministry setting study;
8. Demonstrate the ability to use library resources, particularly the various data bases, in conducting research in ministry;
9. Plan and conduct a careful study of some aspect of one's ministry setting;
10. Write concrete, measurable goal statements for a specific congregational/ministry setting study;
11. Construct at least one survey that measures at least one goal of the congregational/ministry setting study;
12. Describe other appropriate methods of measuring effectiveness in ministry;
13. Demonstrate mastery of acceptable ways of writing up ministry research;
14. Describe basic resources that are useful in doing research in ministry.

III. REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

Each student is required to purchase the following books for the course (**NOTE that required textbooks may be purchased through the Erskine Theological Seminary Virtual Bookstore at [http://www.ecampus.com/erskine.](http://www.ecampus.com/erskine)**)

Ammerman, Nancy T.; Carroll, Jackson W.; Dudley, Carl S.; and McKinney, William, eds. *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998.

Cahalan, Kathleen A. *Projects That Matter*. Bethesda, Md.: The Alban Institute, 2003.

Chilton, Bruce. *Pure Kingdom: Jesus' Vision of God*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996.

Fink, Arlene. *How to Conduct Surveys*. Third Edition. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 2005.

In addition, the student will need Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. Seventh Edition. Revised by John Grossman and Alice Bennett. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006.

Other works relating to research in ministry will be suggested in the course.

IV. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- A. **Students must attend every class meeting.** If a student must be absent for all or part of a session, he/she is responsible for all work done and due for that session. Normally, a student who misses all or part of a session will be required to do additional work. This must be negotiated with the professor. **A student who misses more than a total of one session will not pass the course.**
- B. Students must be adequately prepared for each class session. Adequate preparation consists of completion of all reading and/or writing assignments for that day. The format of this course will largely be lecture/discussion with some small-group work. It is imperative that each student be adequately prepared in order to participate in an intelligent manner in classroom discussions.
- C. The major paper in this course is the design and implementation of a ministry project in the student's own setting. This project should arise out of the student's current ministry context and should be responsive to some aspect of it. This project is to be planned **and** actually carried out during the course. Thus, it is crucial that the student begin working on this project and paper from the very beginning of the course. This paper will be the culmination of a semester-long effort where the student will be guided to produce parts of it in increments. **A detailed guide-sheet is provided for this paper.** The paper will be evaluated on the basis of form as well as content. **The finished copy of this paper is due no later than December 20.**

- D. **Three other shorter pieces of work will be required of the student.** See the **COURSE OUTLINE** for the descriptions and due dates for each of these other papers. Instructions and guide-sheets for these papers are in this syllabus.
- E. Students may occasionally be given short, informal research-type assignments on which to report back to the group. There may also be some in-class writing assignments.
- F. All work must be submitted on time. **Work that is turned in late may be penalized at least one letter grade.** The professor reserves the right to reject any work that is excessively late.
- G. All papers must be typed/processed (twelve point font, double spaced, one inch margins) and fully documented, following the standards in Turabian, 7th edition or later (specific bibliographic information on Turabian given above). In this course, footnotes and a bibliography are required in each paper. The paper's cover page and bibliography are not counted towards page requirements.
- H. The Seminary encourages all students to make use of language, in reference to human beings, that is inclusive rather than needlessly exclusive. 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 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").
- I. 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.

- J. The student should review the Seminary policy on “Incompletes.” A grade of “Incomplete” is not a privilege of the student. It is the prerogative of the professor. It can be given only when (1) a student has completed most of his/her course work and (2) has been providentially hindered from doing the rest. **In this course, the grade “Incomplete” will be given only when both of these conditions are met.**
- K. The student is encouraged to keep a loose-leaf notebook or some kind of file for this course for reading notes, hand-outs, items of bibliography, etc. This course is foundational to the rest of the student’s course work in the D. Min. program. The student’s notebook, if done well, may provide him/her with valuable materials for future work in the D. Min. program as well as in his/her ministry.
- L. All papers must be typed/processed (twelve point type, double-spaced, one-inch margins) and fully documented, following the standards set forth in Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 7th ed. or later.
- M. Students should take care to avoid plagiarism. Plagiarism is the use in writing or wording or ideas produced by others without crediting the author and/or source from which the material was taken. Plagiarism is a serious offense that undermines both the witness and integrity of the Christian community and can have serious consequences for the student. The student should review the Catalog’s discussion about plagiarism.
- N. Once a student has completed, signed, and submitted his/her registration to the Registrar, 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 prorated 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.**

- O. I have regular office hours posted for the fall. A student who needs to see me should first make an appointment especially if he/she is driving a long distance.

V. CLASS MEETING DATES

This course will meet from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on the following Saturdays:

Session 1: September 6

Session 2: October 4

Session 3: November 1

Session 4: December 6

VI. EVALUATION

The Seminary grade scale (ETS 2007-08 *Catalogue*, p. 36) will be used. The student's final grade will be calculated as follows:

Paper # 1	=	20%
Paper # 2	=	20%
Paper # 3	=	20%
Major Paper	=	40%

Session 1: Saturday, September 6

Topic: *Defining an Act of Ministry in Light of the Kingdom of God*

Course requirements, goals, procedures, etc.

I. A Basic Review of Erskine’s Doctor of Ministry Program

- A. The foundations courses and their relations to one another
- B. The rubrics of Norms, Functions, Contexts
- C. The project/dissertation
- D. The relationship between DR 902 and the project/dissertation

II. Defining Ministry

- A. Definitions
- B. Participants
 - 1. God
 - 2. The minister
 - 3. The church
 - 4. The tradition(s)
 - 5. The world
- C. Components
 - 1. A function
 - 2. A context
 - 3. Intentionality
- D. The ultimate sign of Ministry – liberation

III. A Biblical Paradigm for Ministry – The Kingdom of God

- A. Defining “Kingdom of God”
- B. The centrality of the Kingdom of God in Jesus’ teaching
- C. The Kingdom in Judaism
- D. The Kingdom as a future reality in Jesus’ teaching
- E. The Kingdom as a present reality in Jesus’ teaching
- F. The tension between the “already” and the “not yet”

IV. Ministry and Research

- A. Is research in ministry appropriate?
- B. The process of research in ministry (Case Study # 1)
 - 1. The beginning: a need, a question, a problem

- (Why does this project need to be done? To what is it responding?)**
2. Framing the question(s)
(What is it that I am trying to find out?)
 3. Examining the ministry context
(What things do I need to understand about the place where this project will be done?)
 4. Formulating a purpose statement and goals
(What overall thing am I trying to accomplish? What specific things am I trying to accomplish?)
 5. Deciding what information needs to be gathered
(What data do I need to collect in this project and from whom will this information be collected?)
 6. Deciding how to evaluate
(What instruments will I use and how will I use them in order to determine to what extent the goals have been met?)
 7. Deciding how to report results
(How and to whom will the results of this project be reported?)

V. A Ministry Setting Project

- A. Five elements of a project design
 1. Assessment of mission and capacities
 2. Purpose
 3. Activities and resources
 4. Results and impact
 5. Rationale
- B. The literature search

ASSIGNMENT FOR SESSION 1:

1. Read Bruce Chilton, *Pure Kingdom: Jesus' Vision of God*, in its entirety.
2. **Paper # 1 is due in this session.** This paper should be no more than 8-10 pages (double-spaced) where the student summarizes the thrust of Chilton's argument, any significant points of disagreement, and the relevance of Chilton's analysis for the practice of ministry.

Session 2: Saturday, October 4

Topic: *Understanding the Contexts of Ministry*

VI. Identifying the Contexts of Ministry

- A. Introduction
- B. The complexity of contexts (Network Map)
- C. The ecology of a ministry setting
- D. The culture of a ministry setting
- E. The identity of a ministry setting
- F. Discovering the ecology, culture, and identity of a ministry setting
 - 1. Rituals
 - 2. Artifacts
 - 3. History
 - 4. Myths
 - 5. Worldviews
 - 6. Symbols
- G. Interpreting a context of ministry

ASSIGNMENT FOR SESSION 2:

1. Read Nancy T. Ammerman, Jackson W. Carroll, Carl S. Dudley, and William McKinney, *Studying Congregations*, pp. 7-104; 196-239.
2. Read Kathleen A. Cahalan, *Projects That Matter*, pp. 1-29.
3. Write a paper (**Paper # 2**) in which you describe and analyze some aspect of your current ministry in terms of an Act of Ministry. Use the guide-sheet enclosed with the syllabus.

Session 3: Saturday, November 1

Topic: *Understanding the Structures of Ministry*

VII. The Process of a Ministry Setting

- A. Introduction
- B. Basic definitions of process
- C. Formal vs. informal process

- D. Signs of broken process
- E. Process and the life cycle of a congregation
- F. Process and conflicts

VIII. The Program of a Ministry Setting

- A. Introduction
- B. How program relates to process, culture, and identity
- C. Basic issues of program analysis
- D. Program needs assessment
- E. Program evaluation and the crucial issues that must be faced

IX. The Resources of a Ministry Setting

- A. Introduction
- B. Membership resources
- C. Commitment resources
- D. Financial resources
- E. Capital resources
- F. Physical and space resources

X. The Leadership in a Ministry Setting

- A. Introduction
- B. Current models of leadership
- C. New Testament images of church leaders
- D. Servant-leadership
- E. Is servant-leadership a possibility?

ASSIGNMENT FOR SESSION 3:

1. Read Nancy T. Ammerman, Jackson W. Carroll, Carl S. Dudley, and William McKinney, *Studying Congregations*, pp. 105-195.
2. Write a paper (**Paper # 3**) which describes the ecology, culture, and identify of your current ministry setting. A guide-sheet for this paper is included in the syllabus.

Session 4: Saturday, December 6

Topic: *Effectiveness in Ministry*

XI. Evaluating an Act of Ministry

- A. Introduction
- B. The relationship between evaluation and goals
- C. Six steps to effective evaluation
 - 1. Focus the evaluation
 - 2. Create an evaluation design
 - 3. Collect and record data
 - 4. Analyze and interpret information
 - 5. Report and disseminate findings
 - 6. Revise the project's rationale
- D. Methods of evaluating an act of ministry
 - 1. Analyzing quantitative evidence
 - 2. Interviews
 - 3. Diaries or journals
 - 4. Observations
 - 5. Surveys

XII. The Survey As An Instrument of Evaluation

- A. Introduction
- B. What is a survey?
- C. Types of surveys
 - 1. Surveys to establish program needs
 - 2. Surveys to evaluate programs
 - 3. Surveys for research
- D. Surveys and interviews
- E. The form of the survey
- F. Practical concerns about surveys
- G. The analysis of survey data
- H. The presentation of survey results

XIII. Writing Up a Ministry Project

- A. Introduction
- B. Basic matters of form
 - 1. The use of secondary literature
 - 2. Structure and organization
 - 3. Outline of contents
 - 4. Documentation (footnotes)
 - 5. Bibliography

- 6. Appendices
- C. Basic matters of style
- D. Practical exercises in writing for form and style

ASSIGNMENT FOR SESSION 4:

1. Read Arlene Fink, *How to Conduct Surveys*, in its entirety.
2. Read Kathleen A. Cahalan, *Projects That Matter*, pp. 31-95.
3. The student should review the seventh edition of Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. Specifically, careful attention should be given to acceptable forms for footnotes, bibliography, tables of content, and headings/subheadings. Review Turabian regarding Part XIII above.

FINISHED COPY OF MINISTRY PROJECT IS DUE NO LATER THAN DECEMBER 20.

GUIDE-SHEET FOR PAPER # 2 (Due for Session 2)

1. This paper should not be more than 10 pages in length. Its purpose is to enable you to describe some aspect of your current ministry in Biblical and theological terms in light of the discussion in Session 1 of the course.
2. First, describe the functions involved in this aspect of your ministry. For this practice of ministry, are you primarily using your skills as a preacher, teacher, administrator, care-giver, etc? Is it a combination of several functions? Is there one function or skill that is dominant over the others? The purpose of this part of the paper is to enable you to look at specific skills that are involved in this particular ministry experience.
3. Second, reflect on this practice theologically. How are God, the minister, the church, the world, and the tradition involved in it? What kind of interplay exists among these agents in this ministry? In other words, how is this ministry in which you are engaged a distinctly theological activity?

4. Third, describe a recent event in this aspect of your ministry that occurred where the interplay of all of the above took place. As you think about this event, what really took place? What kind of liberation occurred with you, the people involved, etc.?
5. In your paper, reflect on the discussion from Session 1 and the book by Bruce Chilton. Make appropriate references to these sources as you analyze this aspect of your ministry. Footnote where appropriate and include a title page and a bibliography in correct form.

GUIDE-SHEET FOR PAPER # 3 (Due in Session 3)

1. Use the suggestions below as a guide. You may need to modify them to fit your own ministry setting. The purpose of this assignment is to enable you to get at the ecology, culture and identity of your ministry setting.
2. Review the discussion of a congregation's ecology, culture, and identity in Nancy T. Ammerman, et. als., *Studying Congregations*, pp. 23-104; 196-239.
3. In your own words, what is meant by a congregation's ecology?
4. For your own ministry setting, use one of these methods to get at its ecology:
 - a. Construct a congregation time line
 - b. Conduct a space tour
 - c. Explore members' network maps

If possible, involve one or more other people from your ministry setting to help you do the one you choose.

Based on the method you choose, describe the ecology of your ministry setting in as detailed a fashion as you can. Did you learn anything that surprised you? In what ways is your understanding of your current ministry setting clearer to you than it was before?

5. Describe as accurately as you can the demography of your ministry setting.
6. As best as you can, describe what you perceive to be the various cultural worlds of your ministry setting. Is one dominant over the others? What conflicts or tensions, if any, exist because of these varied cultural worlds?
7. Describe the culture and identity of your ministry setting by examining the following aspects of its life: (Review Nancy T. Ammerman, et. als., *Studying Congregations*, pp. 84-102)

- a. Activities
- b. Artifacts
- c. Accounts

Illustrate your description of the culture and identity of your ministry setting with at least one concrete example from each of the three aspects above (a, b, c).

8. Describe what things you see need to be changed about the culture and identity of your ministry setting. Why?
9. Using Figure 3.2 on page 97 of *Studying Congregations*, plot the dominant worldview of your ministry setting. Give concrete evidence to support your view.
10. As you look at the ecology, culture, and identity of your ministry setting, (a) what problems, issues, tensions, conflicts, etc. exist that need to be addressed and (b) what potential ministries exist (either yours, your people's, or both) that are not being carried out?
11. List and describe briefly the possible D. Min. projects that exist based on your study of the ecology, culture, and identity of your ministry setting.
12. Your paper should be no more than 15 pages long, should include a title page, footnotes(as appropriate), and a bibliography in correct form.

GUIDE-SHEET FOR MAJOR PROJECT

NOTE: This guide-sheet is suggestive. It is designed to give the student a general structure with which to work. The student may have to adapt certain parts of it in light of his/her own ministry setting as well as the nature of the congregational project. **The student needs to keep the length of the paper to no more than 25 pages.**

Remember that your project must be conducted and completed by the end of the course. You will need to narrow its focus to accomplish this. Your project may very well be a “small piece” of a larger project you are currently involved in or are planning to do. The project for this course may, in fact, take the form of some kind of preparation for a larger project you are planning or for the project you will use for your project/dissertation at the end of your D. Min. program.

Use the divisions below to organize and format your paper.

I. Ministry Setting

The student should describe his/her ministry setting. He/she may summarize the relevant data from the earlier paper on ministry setting ecology, culture, and identity. In particular, the student should carefully explain aspects of the ministry setting that are especially critical to the project. What particular aspects of the life of the ministry setting will this study involve?

II. The Problem, Need, Issue, Etc.

Drawing from the ministry setting, the student should describe succinctly the problem, need, issue, etc. that calls forth the necessity of this project. Typical problems, needs, issues, etc. would include:

- a. a church/group that is in severe conflict
- b. a church/group which faces a context that is rapidly changing
- c. ministry programs that are ineffective
- d. a church/group which is seeking to evangelize the community or engage in some type of community service
- e. a church/group where leaders need specialized training
- f. a church/group with no real sense of mission or purpose
- g. a church/group which needs to begin one or more new ministries

As the problem, need, issue, etc. is described, the student should discuss any unique features it has in this specific ministry context. In other words, what unique “twists” does the problem have in this particular setting? These “twists” will need to be factored into the project plan.

III. Purpose and Goals

The student should state in a succinct sentence the purpose of this project. You may complete a sentence like: “The purpose of this project is to . . .”

Related to the purpose are the goals. The purpose is an over-arching statement that is somewhat general in nature. The goals are concrete. You should have no more than two or three goal statements. Each goal statement must be measurable in some concrete fashion.

As you discuss the overarching goal of your project, describe it in terms of an act of ministry. Think about the earlier paper you have written in which you have described some part of your work as an act of ministry. In what ways does your project involve the intersections of God, the Church, the Minister, the Tradition, and the World? The intent of asking you to describe your project as an act of ministry is to help you think of your project not just in practical terms but also in theological terms.

IV. The Plan of the Project

Describe here in detail the plan you followed. Indicate the other people who were involved and show how they were involved. Explain everything in enough detail so that your reader knows exactly what you did. Your plan should include any preparatory work you did prior to carrying out the project. This might include securing necessary permissions, choosing a group, advance publicity, etc. Indicate exactly what you did in the project.

V. Evaluation

Describe the exact instruments you used to evaluate the goals of the project. Include with your paper a copy of each one. Show specifically how each instrument was designed to measure at least one of your goals.

Remember that one of your evaluation instruments needs to be the survey you have already constructed for Session 4 of the class. Other evaluation instruments may include such things as an interview, an observation, a journal, statistical analysis, etc.

Describe how you assessed the data you collected from your evaluation. Summarize the results of your evaluation. The best way to do this is to restate each goal and show to what extent your data show that the goal was met.

Describe how and to whom you will present the results of your project. This report may take the form of a written or oral report, etc.

VI. The Literature Search

List in the form of an annotated bibliography at least 12 resources that are related to your project. List the work, give bibliographic information in correct form, and write a brief summary of its contents. These resources can be books, articles,

videos, etc. Include material that you actually use in the study/project but also other material that you found helpful.

When you have listed the relevant sources, write a few paragraphs in which you describe how these works informed your project.