

**SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY AND MINISTRY**  
**SEATTLE UNIVERSITY**  
**901 12<sup>TH</sup> AVENUE, P.O. BOX 222000**  
**SEATTLE, WA 98122-1090**

**STMA 557 M.DIV. SYNTHESIS**  
**3 CREDITS**

SPRING QUARTER 2012  
TUESDAYS, 9:00 – 11:50 A.M.  
HUNTHAUSEN 100

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**SYLLABUS**

**I. COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course is designed to assist students in the integration and articulation of their gifts and limits in relation to their ministry as leaders in the church. It stresses the synthesis of theological study, ministerial experience, and personal and spiritual growth. To be taken during final year of course work. Prerequisite: STMA 546 and 555.

**II. STM LEARNING OUTCOMES THIS COURSE ADDRESSES**

- 1) Ability to reflect theologically on the central themes of the Christian tradition.
- 2) Ability to articulate a personal and ecclesial theology of ministry.
- 3) Ability to inform ecclesial leadership with theology.
- 4) Ability to articulate one's relationship with God, as it is informed by theological reflection in one's social context.
- 5) Ability to engage a community with the larger social context and to articulate and communicate the mission that guides the community.

*[Note that four of these five learning outcomes make specific reference to theology!!!]*

### III. COURSE GOALS

The distinctive educational model of Seattle University's School of Theology and Ministry guides the work of M.Div. Synthesis. Think of it as a three-legged stool: the integration of theological understanding, ministerial or pastoral skills, and personal and spiritual formation. And this stool, this integrative educational model, rests upon three foundational commitments of STM: to ecumenical collaboration, to multicultural competence, and to a faith that does justice. That said, M.Div. Synthesis gives focused and sustained attention to the "theological understanding" leg of the stool.

Guided by this educational model and these commitments, as well as by this focus on theology, each student in M.Div. Synthesis will:

- review significant insights and learnings from her/his course work and formation activities in the M.Div. program;
- identify the sources of and resources for her/his theology from scripture, tradition, and experience;
- present these sources of/resources for theology to other members of the class and discuss them;
- write a paper on sources of/resources for her/his theology;
- articulate her/his theological standpoint, exploring its center of gravity (or core), shape, and pattern;
- present this theological standpoint publicly to all interested members of the STM community and discuss it;
- reflect upon how her/his theological standpoint provides a foundation for ministry and how this theological standpoint is interwoven with her/his spirituality;
- synthesize this articulation of theological standpoint, as well as all other course activities, in a final paper;
- deepen attitudes and practices of ongoing education and formation that will sustain her/his ministry in the years to come (especially skills of attentive reading, thoughtful and concise writing, reasoned and compassionate discussion and conversation, and spiritual practices of action and contemplation).

### IV. TEXTS

Consider all of your papers, textbooks, handouts, and notes from all previous courses at STM, as well as unread books crying to you to complete, novels, art museums, symphony and chamber orchestras, films, plays, water and mountains, gardens and forests, pulpits and altars. Plan on allocating several hours a week over the next ten weeks just to the task of synthesizing – reading, re-reading, reflecting, re-creating holistically. The process will vary for each student. In other words, you the students and your entire careers here at STM are the primary required texts for this course! The instructor may also assign a few carefully chosen readings to further our work of theological, ministerial, and spiritual synthesis.

## **V. STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE COURSE**

Each student is responsible for the following:

- Class attendance, preparation, and participation;
- Facilitation of one class session (individually or in pairs);
- Class presentation on sources of/resources for theology;
- Paper on sources of/resources for theology;
- Public presentation on theological standpoint;
- Oral response to another class member's presentation on theological standpoint;
- Final synthesis paper.

## **VI. FACULTY MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE COURSE**

The faculty member is responsible for the following:

- Course planning and organization;
- Preparation of syllabus;
- Facilitation of first and last class sessions;
- Providing written and oral feedback on student presentations and papers;
- Serving as theological, ministerial, and spiritual resource throughout the course;
- Encouraging students and holding them accountable in their work of theological, ministerial, and spiritual articulation and integration.

## **VII. GRADING**

Class attendance, preparation, and participation; Class session facilitation;	20%
Oral response to another student's public presentation	20%
Class presentation and paper on sources of/resources for theology	30%
Public presentation on theological standpoint	20%
Final synthesis paper	30%

## VIII. SCHEDULE OF CLASS SESSIONS

### A. GETTING STARTED

#### **MARCH 27 – TUESDAY IN THE FIFTH WEEK IN LENT**

Engaging in Some “Godly Play”

Course Organization

Initial Work toward Theological, Ministerial, and Spiritual Integration

### B. SOURCES OF AND RESOURCES FOR THEOLOGY: SCRIPTURE, TRADITION, AND EXPERIENCE

#### **APRIL 3 – TUESDAY IN HOLY WEEK**

Identifying and Sharing Sources of/Resources for Theology

#### **APRIL 10 – TUESDAY IN EASTER WEEK**

Student Presentations (x3) and Discussion

De-brief Initial Presentations

#### **APRIL 17 – TUESDAY IN THE SECOND WEEK OF EASTER**

Student Presentations (x4) and Discussion

#### **APRIL 24 – TUESDAY IN THE THIRD WEEK OF EASTER**

Student Presentations (x4) and Discussion

### C. ARTICULATING AND EXPLORING THEOLOGICAL STANDPOINTS: CENTER OF GRAVITY (OR CORE), SHAPE, AND PATTERN

#### **MAY 1 – STS. PHILIP AND JAMES, APOSTLES**

Public Presentations (x2), Responses, and Discussion

De-brief Initial Presentations

#### **MAY 8 – DAME JULIAN OF NORWICH**

Public Presentations (x3), Responses, and Discussion

#### **MAY 15 – TUESDAY IN THE SIXTH WEEK OF EASTER**

Public Presentations (x3), Responses, and Discussion

#### **MAY 22 – TUESDAY IN THE SEVENTH WEEK OF EASTER**

Public Presentations (x3), Responses, and Discussion

### D. LEAVE TAKING

#### **MAY 29 – TUESDAY AFTER PENTECOST**

Concluding Conversation and Sending Prayer

## IX. PROCEDURES AND ASSIGNMENTS

### A. Classroom Presence

As with other STM supervision and practicum courses, your presence is essential to this learning process. Out of respect for the quality of our group process and sharing, please plan to be on time and to attend all sessions. Any foreseeable absence should be negotiated with the group in advance. Please alert someone if you are ill or if an emergency arises. Mark Taylor's contact information is on the first page of this syllabus.

It has been said that we need to show up, pay attention, name our truth, and trust the process. As listeners we show up and pay attention. This means deep, empathetic listening. After years at STM, this is something we do well and with grace for each other. While people are setting up and taking down, please refrain from chatter and discussion, so that a spirit of presence and attending permeates the room for the presenters. Perhaps the most highly desired blessing in today's society is precisely the gift of presence. Our presence is gift to the other; our reverence opens us to receive the gifts they share.

### B. Class Session Facilitation

Each student is responsible for facilitating one session of the course (either individually or in pairs). Class sessions should begin with a brief prayer and check-in (April 3, 10, 17, 24) or prayer and welcome (May 1, 8, 15, 22) led by the student facilitator of the day. Please allow the prayer to express your own distinctive spiritual practice, as well as that of your ecclesial community, if appropriate. The student facilitator will guide the process for their class session (including timing of activities and breaks). Allow five or ten minutes at the end to provide some act of evaluation/closure/blessing. The facilitator is also responsible for arranging the classroom to provide a sense of sacred space. Be sure to remind presenters gently about time limits. (Time is key – don't allow more to the first presenter and shortchange the last!).

### C. What Is Theology? (one last time)

As all of you have heard in other classes you have taken from me here at STM, I believe that there is considerable consensus in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries about what, in the broadest sense, theology is and does (as well as lots of divergence on the details!). Most basically, I understand theology to host a dialogue between "Tradition" and "Situation," between the wisdom of a religious heritage we receive from our ancestors and our own experience of the divine in our contemporary context. "Tradition" refers both to scripture and to tradition in the narrower sense of: doctrinal teachings, stories of the saints, church history, patterns of worship, hymns, visual expressions of faith, etc., etc. Experience, or "Situation," includes my own personal life-story, as well as the symbols, assumptions, values, sciences, artifacts, and philosophies of the communities and social groups around me. The ultimate goal of this dialogue between scripture/tradition and experience is new meaning and truth for living, above all enacting the gospel call for a more just and humane world.

## IX. PROCEDURES AND ASSIGNMENTS (CONTINUED)

### D. Presentation One – Sources of and Resources for Theology: Scripture, Tradition, and Experience

1. This presentation will be made before the members of the STMA 557 class. It will develop the raw materials for the second presentation and identify some of its core insights.

#### 2. Review, Preparation, and Integration

As you culminate your studies, identify the five to seven most important sources of and resources for your theology from scripture, tradition, and experience.

- Scripture. Ask yourself which strands of the biblical tradition, which canonical books, which stories or cycles of stories from the Hebrew Testament or the Acts of the Apostles, which of the four gospels, which elements of/stories about the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, do you most often find yourself quoting, referring to, returning to, being inspired by?
- Tradition. Similarly, which figures from the history of the church, which creedal expressions or doctrinal statements, which liturgical practices, which hymns, which prayers or prayer practices, which elements of community life and polity, which artifacts (paintings, church buildings, musical compositions), etc., etc., inform your theology most profoundly?
- Experience. Finally, which experiences, either in the last few years since you've been at STM (maybe in an internship, or a worship service, or while preaching, leading prayer, gathering a community, serving others, ministering to the sick, the needy, the dying,...), or previously in your life, have mostly profoundly deconstructed and reconstructed your theology?
- As you review and reflect upon the sources of/resources for your theology, be aware that this raw material will be incorporated into the second presentation in this course, the one in which you articulate and explore the theological standpoint on the basis of which you minister and which is interwoven with your spirituality.

For our April 3 class session, please identify the two or three most important sources of and resources for your theology from each of the three areas described above: scripture, tradition, and experience, do an initial descriptive "sketch" of them (either in pictures or writing), and be prepared BRIEFLY to speak about this material in class. Also, spend some time before April 3 reviewing the scripture, historical theology, systematic theology, worship, and ethics courses from your time at STM that have been most influential in shaping your theology and be prepared to share some resources from these courses (a book, an idea, a project, etc.). The primary task of the facilitator for the day on April 3 will be to shape the BRIEF sharing of these materials.

## IX. PROCEDURES AND ASSIGNMENTS (CONTINUED)

### 3. Class Presentation

Each student will have 20 minutes to present the sources of/resources for her/his theology on April 10, 17, or 24. Primary goals should be clarity, persuasiveness, and winsomeness. As you present, stay in touch with your feeling level. This is not just reporting – get into the passion of the meaning of the event. Relate the material knowing the time will fly by. Engage the group. Use color, large paper, power point, pictures, gestures, story-telling techniques, music – whatever it takes to communicate your truth.

### 4. Suggested Schedule of Class Sessions for Presentations

#### on Sources of/Resources for Theology (April 10, 17, and 24)

Prayer and Check-In	5 minutes
First Presentation	
Presentation	20 minutes
Discussion	15 minutes
Transition/Stretch	5 minutes
Second Presentation	
Presentation	20 minutes
Discussion	15 minutes
Break (at 10:20)	10 minutes
Third Presentation	
Presentation	20 minutes
Discussion	15 minutes
Transition/Stretch	5 minutes
Fourth Presentation (or De-Brief – April 10)	
Presentation	20 minutes
Discussion	15 minutes
Evaluation/Closure/Blessing	5 minutes

5. Paper. Each student will write a 7-10 page paper on the sources of and resources for her/his theology in light of their presentation, discussion with fellow class members and their feedback, and subsequent reflection. This paper is due a week after the student's presentation itself.

## IX. PROCEDURES AND ASSIGNMENTS (CONTINUED)

### E. Presentation Two – Articulating One’s Theological Standpoint and Exploring Its Center of Gravity (or Core), Shape, and Pattern

1. This will be a public presentation; all STM faculty, staff, and students will be invited.

#### 2. Review, Preparation, and Integration

Considering the sources of and resources for your theology identified in your first presentation and paper, take the next step and articulate how those sources/resources come together to form your own theological standpoint. (Two students could identify similar theological sources/resources and yet put them together very differently!)

Explore your standpoint’s center of gravity (or core):

What’s at the heart of things for you theologically?

its shape:

To what other insights and convictions does this core extend? How would you describe the overall contours of your theological standpoint?

and its pattern:

How are the various components of your theological standpoint related and connected to each other? What does the fabric of the tapestry look like?

- As you articulate and explore your theological standpoint, be aware of central images, topics, and themes: God, Jesus Christ, the Spirit; the cosmos, the church, creation, sin, grace, human creaturehood, freedom, sacraments, last things, etc.
- Refer to key theologians and texts, quoting them strategically, as you develop your reflections. Is the theology out of which you minister based on a feminist approach? process theology? liberation theology? Is Rahner’s understanding of the human person central to your theology? Luther’s? Calvin’s? Wesley’s? Whose insights into christology or God’s relationship to the world help you the most? Johnson’s? McFague’s? Migliore’s? Cone’s? And so on and so on...
- Also, spend some time reviewing the pastoral skills, spirituality, and field education courses from your time at STM that have been most influential in shaping your ministerial identity and spiritual practice. What are the theological reasons why you do the ministry you do? Or, how does your ministry grow out of the theological insights and convictions you hold? Or, how does your theology undergird your ministry? Similarly, what spiritual disciplines and practices are you led to by your theological standpoint and/or what spirituality keeps your theology grounded and vital?

STM is committed to theological reflection throughout the coursework that constitutes the M.Div. degree. As you articulate the sources of/resources for your theology as a coherent, creative standpoint, revisit the method of theological reflection you find most helpful. (You have MTI and Theology of

## IX. PROCEDURES AND ASSIGNMENTS (CONTINUED)

Pastoral Leadership manuals, texts from both series of courses, and your own method developed in the last quarter of your MTI experience.) As you know, every method of theological reflection consists of attention to at least three elements: tradition (including scripture), experience (or situation), and action. Each method defines these a little differently, each calls for different skills, but each relies on information from these three areas so that the person who reflects theologically is changed to be or to do something in a new way, with deepened understanding.

In order to emphasize the “being” as well as the “doing,” I would like to propose a fourth element: contemplation, and arrange these elements in two pairs of poles between which theological reflection moves: **tradition (including scripture) – situation (or experience)** and **action/practice – contemplation/renewal**.

### 3. Public Presentation

On May 1, 8, 15, or 22, each student will make a 25 minute presentation answering the following questions:

**What is your theological standpoint?**

**What is its center of gravity (or core), shape, and pattern?**

**For what ministry does this theological standpoint provide the foundation?**

**How is this theological standpoint interwoven with your spirituality?**

### 4. Suggested Schedule of Class Sessions for Presentations on Theological Standpoint (May 1, 8, 15, and 22)

Welcome and Prayer	5 minutes
First Presentation	
Presentation	25 minutes
Response and Discussion	20 minutes
Transition/Break	10 minutes
Second Presentation	
Presentation	25 minutes
Response and Discussion	20 minutes
Transition/Break	10 minutes
Third Presentation (or De-Brief – May 1)	
Presentation	25 minutes
Response and Discussion	20 minutes
Evaluation/Closure/Blessing	10 minutes

This presentation may be enhanced by your use of creative posters, power point, overheads, music, artifacts, drama, etc. For above all, the presentations offer a time and space to honor your process of education and formation; feel empowered to “strut your stuff.” If you have any special needs for your presentations, please be in contact with the instructor at least a week ahead of time to make the necessary arrangements for equipment.

## IX. PROCEDURES AND ASSIGNMENTS (CONTINUED)

5. Oral Response. The respondent will initiate the discussion of another student's presentation (5 minutes maximum). Keep in mind that the respondent will have the first word, not the last word – your work in the response is to open up discussion, not close it down. Consider these guidelines as you respond to one another in this formal way:

- Highlighting the strengths of what the student has presented;
- Why their insights are important;
- Seeking clarification on points that were not clear or not understood;
- Raising questions for further thought and development;
- Pointing to resources and strategies that will help the presenter develop her/his line of thought better;
- What ministerial and spiritual implications their theological material opens up.

### F. Preparation for Leave Taking Session – May 29

Journal or doodle on the following questions:

- 1) How have I changed since I first came to STM? How has life shifted (friends, family, etc.)? How have my physical surroundings changed? At home? At work?
- 2) What places have been significant places or sacred sites for me during my STM journey: places on the Seattle University campus, places in the surrounding area, meeting places of faith communities, ministry sites?
- 3) Are there areas of unfinished business with STM faculty, staff, administrators, or other students? Is there something I need to do at this point to deal with this unfinished business, for myself or for another?
- 4) What are the primary gifts or learnings that have occurred since I first came to STM?
- 5) What would be helpful to me in ritualizing the leave taking (or the coming near to the end) of my program at STM?

Be prepared to share with the group:

- 1) Your primary insights from the above journaling/doodling.
- 2) Anything you still want/need to have happen to bring your STM experience to closure.
- 3) Any last thing you haven't gotten to say before.
- 4) What do you think will sustain you in ongoing learning and formation as minister and a person of faith?
- 5) A SYMBOL of your theology, ministry, and spirituality.

**IX. PROCEDURES AND ASSIGNMENTS (CONTINUED)****G. Final Synthesis Paper**

Your final 10-15 page paper should tie the work of this quarter all together and so provide a capstone to your career at STM. At a minimum, the paper should include (how you organize, develop, and illustrate this is completely up to you):

- 1) A three to five page section once more setting out your theological standpoint, now refined and strengthened by everything you have read, thought, spoken, and heard throughout the course.
- 2) A three to five page section discussing how this theological standpoint provides a foundation for your ministry and how it is interwoven with your spirituality
- 3) A bibliography of all works cited throughout the paper.

This paper is due no later than 12:00 noon on Tuesday, June 5 in Mark Taylor's office (Hunthausen 126) or as an attachment to an email message to him.