

**(514) THEOLOGY AND THE PRACTICE OF MINISTRY**

Dr. Charles Neal

972 672 0852

charlesaneal@sbcglobal.net

The integration of the role of the practicing pastor with the church's theological heritage with his/her perception of the fundamental concerns of Christian theology and his/her role as a Christian minister (preacher, pastor, etc.). Theology as an ongoing task of critical investigation and reflection will be stressed, and special consideration will be given to those issues, events, and institutions which form the context in which the pastor is required to think, speak, and act with theological clarity.

**Readings**

Buechner, Frederick, *The Sacred Journey*. ISBN 0-060611839

Buechner, Frederick, *Now and Then*. ISBN 0-060611820

Caputo, John D., *What Would Jesus Deconstruct?* ISBN 978-0-8010-3136-6

English, Donald, *An Evangelical Theology of Preaching*. 0-687-12178-7

Jones, Scott J., *United Methodist Doctrine: The Extreme Center*. ISBN 0-687-03485-X

Weems, Lovett H., *Leadership in the Wesleyan Spirit*. ISBN 0-687046920

**Written Assignment –** Write on any 5 of the following questions

1. In the light of your reading of Buechner, English, Jones, Weems, and Caputo write an essay setting forth your present understanding of the Christian Church and the Christian faith and life. Along the way, discuss how each of the authors has/ has not been helpful to you in writing your own statement. (8-10 pages)
2. Discuss Donald English's understanding of "the transcendent in the midst?" How does this relate to his understanding of God's presence with us in our everyday lives and world? In the light of this discuss his understanding of our role as pastors to be *observers, interpreters, prophets and heralds of liberation?* Does this have far-reaching implications for our understanding of God and our role as pastors? If so, why? If not, why not? (4-5 pages).
3. What does John Caputo mean by "the event" and "the possibility of the impossible" in the chapter entitled "A Prayer for the Impossible" in his book, *What would Jesus Deconstruct?* (ch. 3) What relevance can this have for our understanding of "the event of Jesus as the Christ"? How can this enrich our theological and pastoral understanding, teaching and preaching of "the event of Jesus as the Christ"? Discuss fully. In the light of your reading of Caputo's 5<sup>th</sup> chapter, what do you think that Jesus would deconstruct? Discuss fully. Feel free to discuss your agreements and disagreements with Caputo's contentions. (8-10 pages)

4. A pastor was late coming into his first service in his new appointment. He was found at his study window with tears in his eyes. "What is wrong?" asked the usher. "Are you ill?" The minister replied, "No. I was just looking out in the alley at all of those dirty little children playing." The usher, with dropped head, replied, "Oh, yes, I know what you mean, but you will become used to it." The pastor replied, "I know I will. That is why I am crying." (Weems, p. 55). Are there things that we see every day but do not truly see? Discuss your "call" to and understanding of your ministry in the light of this episode. How does Weem's contention that *Leadership in the Wesleyan Spirit* "Leads from the Center and the Edge" (Ch. 6) relate to this episode and to your understanding of your own "call" and ministry? (5-6 pages).
  
5. Has your point of view on the Christian faith, its doctrines, or your understanding of your own faith undergone any significant changes that you can identify? Where do you encounter the greatest difficulties in understanding and/or interpreting the Christian faith and/or the life of the church? What seems to be the "cutting-edge" of your own growth in faith, understanding and ministry? (5-6 pages)
  
6. What contemporary events, issues, and institutions form the context in which you are required to think, speak, and act with theological clarity? Which of these have become for you, the most urgent as you seek to carry on your pastoral ministry? What difference does it make if you seek to think, speak, and act with such theological clarity? What difference does it make if you fail to do so? (4-6 pages).

#### IMPORTANT INFORMATION

\*\*\*\*\*

The completed pre-class work for courses 211-514 must be sent to the Course of Study School office **postmarked on or before May 15, 2014** OR submitted electronically through the Locker system (see information below) **no later than May 15, 2014 at 11:59.59 p.m.** Pre-class work submitted after May 15 will have grading penalties assessed as follows: (grades are expressed alphabetically from A to F, with F being the lowest grade)

- Submissions dated May 16 - May 31 will receive a one letter grade reduction
- Submissions dated June 1 - June 14 will receive a two letter grade reduction.
- Submissions dated June 16 or later, the student will be dropped from that course registration with no refund (of registration, fees or housing)

A request for an extension requires the following:

- It must be submitted in writing to the director of the Course of Study School. Via e-mail, send to Jeannie Trevino-Teddlie at [COSSExt@smu.edu](mailto:COSSExt@smu.edu). Via regular mail, send to COSS Extension, P.O. Box 750133, Dallas, TX 75275-0133. By fax, send to 214-768-1042). **Make sure that you notify the COSS office of any transmission.**
- It must be received by May 1
- It must state valid reason(s) for needing an extension
- It must state the course name(s) and number(s) for which the extension(s) is/are requested
- It must state the amount of time being requested (not beyond June 14)

**In order for an extension request to be considered, the student must be fully registered (i.e., fees paid, signatures acquired, Release of Liability and Course Registration and Housing forms filled out and submitted). Before a decision can be made regarding an extension, the Director will consult with the student's district superintendent, local pastor registrar and instructor.**

### Optional Electronic Submission for Pre Class Assignments

#### Course of Study School Lockers

We are offering an alternate method for the submission of pre-class assignments. The Course of Study School is using a "Locker System", Locker.SMU. This system allows COSS students to submit their pre-class assignments electronically. Please remember that we will continue to accept mailed in paper pre-class assignments. Electronic submissions and the use of Locker.SMU is optional.

A Locker will be assigned to each student for each class they are taking. For example, if you are taking Hebrew Bible I (211) and Formation Discipleship (213) you will be assigned two different Lockers. The instructor for each course will then be able to log in to the Locker System and retrieve your submitted assignments for each particular class.

When your registration is received, the Course of Study School staff will be creating your private Locker(s) and informing you via e-mail when your Locker(s) has been successfully created. In this email, you will receive specific instructions on how to access your Locker(s) and how to upload your assignments.

If you have not registered by May 15th, you will not be guaranteed a locker and you will need to submit your pre-class assignments via postal service.

The Locker System will automatically date and time stamp your submitted assignments to inform the instructor and the Course of Study School staff when the assignment was submitted.

The pre-class assignments should be submitted to the Locker System **ONLY in .doc format.**

When you are ready to submit your pre-class assignments online, but have not received an e-mail with information on how to access your private Locker(s), please contact the Course of Study School staff at COSS@smu.edu with the subject line: Locker Access. The Course of Study School staff will then reply with specific instructions on how to access your Locker(s) and how to upload your assignments.

The completed pre-class work for courses 211-514 must be submitted to the Locker System **no later than May 15<sup>th</sup> at 11:59:59 p.m.** Pre-class work submitted to the Locker System after May 15 will incur grading penalties as mentioned above on the grading guidelines. The same deadline restrictions apply whether you are submitting pre-class assignments electronically or via postal service.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Students should keep a printed copy of each assignment and bring a copy of each assignment to class regardless of how the assignment was submitted.**

In addition, students should include a one-page autobiography for each instructor.

Each assignment should be typed, double-spaced, or legibly handwritten, with pagination numbers, and be accompanied by a completed cover sheet. A copy of the cover sheet can be found in the Course of Study School Catalogue and can be photocopied, it will also appear as a preloaded file when you access your locker.

Guidelines for writing pre-class assignments and information on academic dishonesty are provided in the Course of Study School catalog, available on the website. Students are expected to understand what constitutes plagiarism. Students who are found to plagiarize are subject to grading penalties, which may include dismissal from the school.