

PERKINS COURSE OF STUDY SCHOOL
524 Theological Reflection: Practice of Ministry
First Session: July 6 - July 24, 2026
9:50 - 11:45 a.m.. First Week Synchronous (Online)
Weeks 2-3 Asynchronous (Online)

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Course Objectives:

This course is the capstone to the student's basic course of study. Its focus is the integration of the biblical, theological, and practical aspects of ministry.

Students will be able to:

1. Articulate a Trinitarian theology for the practice of ministry.
2. State clearly the nature and mission of the Church and its relation to pastoral ministry.
3. Demonstrate the ability to reflect theologically.
4. Develop a plan for lifelong theological reading, reflection, and growth.

Required Readings:

- Willimon, William. Pastor: The Theology and Practice of Ordained Ministry, revised edition. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2016.
- Calahan, Kathleen. Introducing the Practice of Ministry.
- Wood, Charles and Blue, Ellen. Attentive to God: Thinking Theologically in Ministry. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2008.
- Film: The Mission (1986). Robert de Niro, Jeremy Irons

Supplementary Readings:

- Warner, Lacey and Carder, Ken. *The Grace to Lead: Practicing Leadership in the Wesleyan Tradition*. Nashville: United Methodist General Board of Higher Education, 2016.
- Buechner, Frederick. *The Sacred Journey*.

Pre-Class Assignments
Complete Both Assignments (Total 30 points toward final grade)

Assignment One: Critical Reading of *Pastor*, by William Willimon (15 points, 8-12 pages)

In his text *Pastor: The Theology and Practice of Ordained Ministry*, William Willimon often digresses into social commentary concerning the state of the church, theology, the ministry, and the status of Christians within the greater (American) culture. These comments provide insight into Willimon's understanding of the *state of things* and *what needs to change*. In practical theology, this is called the pastoral situation or challenge. His text is a response to his perceived challenge.

Identify, cite, and describe several examples of Willimon's social or theological commentary or criticism from within the text. Considering his critique, write a summary of Willimon's perspective on the context of ministry, specifically, the pastoral challenge facing today's church. After doing so, provide your own critique of his perspectives or possible biases. What do you believe is the greatest challenge facing today's pastors and today's church? Why? How does this impact the pastoral task?

Assignment Two: Critical Reflection on the Film *The Mission*. (15 points, 5-10 pages)

After completing the required readings, view the film *The Mission** (1986, Jeremy Irons, Robert DeNiro) in light of the assigned texts, scripture, and personal experience. Respond in writing to the following prompts:

1. An archetype is a "a primordial image, character, or pattern of circumstances that recurs throughout literature and thought consistently enough to be considered a universal concept or situation."¹

The plot and character development of *The Mission* utilize the concept of archetypes. Set within the colonial history of the Jesuit mission among the Guaraní, *The Mission* communicates beyond that context, illuminating paradigms of cultural and social relationships. As such, *The Mission* can be viewed as a type of parable.

Identify and describe four of the character archetypes evident in the film and their role in the story. Pay special attention to how their traits may change or evolve within the story. For each, attempt to identify a similar type within the gospel narratives.

2. Identify and describe the significant pastoral crisis and conflict at the center of the story.
3. Reflect upon your own experience of ministry. From your list, choose the archetype with which you most directly identify and explain why this is the case. Choose one or more conflicts or tensions within the film that resonate with your own experience of ministry, describe the conflict or tension and how it relates to your experience.
4. Consider the end of the film, the beatitudes found in Matthew 5:1-11, and the passion narratives of the gospels. Was the historic mission depicted in the film successful? What criteria would be relevant to evaluate such a mission, and by extension, your own ministry?

¹ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/archetype>

* *The Mission* (rated PG) contains scenes of violence, sexuality, slavery, and nudity. Students offended or disturbed at these aspects of the film may perform this assignment utilizing a cinematic depiction of C. S. Lewis: *The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe* or propose to the instructor an alternative film.

Policies for Pre-Class Assignments

1. **Deadline** for submission of pre-class assignments for Perkins 2026 Course of Study School: Monday, June 22, 2026.

2. **Pre-class assignment completion policy.** Instructors have discretion to lower a student's grade for the pre-class assignments and their overall course grade for late submission of pre-class assignments. Submission of all pre-class assignments by the first day of class is required to attend the class. Students who do not have pre-class assignments completed by the first day of class may be required to withdraw from the course without a refund.

3. Students are encouraged to contact their instructor if they have any questions about the pre-class assignments for their courses. They should also contact their instructor if they expect to submit their pre-class assignments following the submission deadline.

4. All pre-class assignments will be submitted in Microsoft Word format and uploaded to the Perkins Course of Study School's learning management system (LMS), called "Canvas."

5. **COSS Writing Style** All Perkins Course of Study School courses use the same style of writing, known as the Chicago/Turabian style of writing. Basic examples of citations for written assignments are available for reference in the COSS Student Policies and on the COSS web site.

Turabian, Kate L. *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, Ninth Edition: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers (Chicago Guides to Writing, Editing, and Publishing) Ninth Edition ISBN-10: 022643057X ISBN-13: 978-02264