DRAFT v.1
Subject to change. Full syllabus available in Canvas Wednesday, January 13, 2027.

Loyola Institute for Ministry
Loyola University New Orleans

Introduction to Practical Theology
LIM-G703-Y1G0E

Spring 2027

Instructor: Deborah Wilhelm, D. Min. **Office Hours:** By appointment, email me to set up a meeting
Email: dwilhelm@loyno.edu

Important! You will be notified by email when your course is available (normally the week before class begins). Please check your *Loyola Gmail* account for instructions. ***Please reply*** to the instructor's email when you receive it.

Course Description

This course seeks to help participants develop a rhythm of disciplined reflection and action for the sake of the reign of God. The sociocultural, personal, and institutional contexts of one's primary ministry praxis along with the Christian tradition form the matrices of practical theology. Communication skills, interpretation theory and social analysis are key components of the conversation in which faith and daily life meet and build.

Introduction to Practical Theology presents a methodological grounding for the entire Master of Pastoral Studies and Master of Religious Education programs at the Loyola Institute for Ministry. It describes key features of practical theology and then presents a model for understanding the contexts that shape our ministries. It also presents a method for reflecting critically on ministerial experiences and on the ideas and social forces that influence our spirituality and interpretations.

Key Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, you will have developed:

- an initial understanding of practical theology.
- a working description of their ministry praxis.
- an appreciation of the dynamic, hermeneutical, critical and transformative character of practical theology.
- a method for engaging in practical theology.

- some first steps in practicing this method.
- communication skills that foster dialogue and enhance community.
- a practice of prayer informed by Ignatian spirituality.

Required Readings

Please purchase the texts for this class as soon as possible from the bookstore of your choice or from the Loyola Bookstore.

Cahalan, Kathleen A. *Introducing the Practice of Ministry*. Liturgical Press, 2010. ISBN-13: 978-0-8146-3169-0 **Note:** This text is available in Canvas as an ebook whose pages you may download.

Fleischer, Barbara, et al. *Introduction to Practical Theology*. New Orleans: Loyola Institute for Ministry, 2020. (No purchasing required, this LIM course book and individual chapters will be made available weekly through Canvas).

Keirsey, David, and Marilyn Bates. *Please Understand Me*. Prometheus Nemesis Books, 1984. ISBN-13: 978-0960695409. **Please be sure to obtain the 1984 edition**.

Veling, Terry. *Practical Theology: On Earth as it is in Heaven*. Orbis Books, 2005. ISBN-13: 978-1-57075-614-6

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord*. United States Catholic Conference, 2005, https://www.usccb.org/resources/co-workers-vineyard-lay-ecclesial-ministry-2005.pdf.

Additional required and recommended articles found in the Canvas course.

Recommended Text

Michael, Chester P, and Marie C. Norrisey. *Prayer and Temperament: Different Prayer Forms for Different Personality Types*. Open Door, Inc, 2009. ISBN-13: 978-0-9401-3602-1 This text is available used on Amazon and other bookseller sites. It is available to read online at the Internet Archive Library after creating a free account.

Evaluation and Course Requirements

Sequence of Topics/Calendar of Assignments

Weekly sessions in this course run from Tuesday–Monday. Please note that all assignments must be completed by midnight on Monday, the last day of the weekly session, except for Week 1; you must complete your personal introduction by Sunday, 1/24 by 11:59 pm Central Time, or risk being administratively dropped from the course. Complete your

discussion questions by Monday, 1/25, by 11:59 pm Central Time.

Session	Topic	Assignments
Week 1 1/18 – 1/25	Introductions (1/18 Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Holiday)	Introduce self, listen to audio, complete readings and discussion question
Week 2 1/26 – 2/1	"Doing" Practical Theology (Sept. 1 Labor Day holiday)	Complete readings, videos, discussion questions
Week 3 2/2 – 2/8	Spirituality for Ministry (September 7, Labor Day holiday)	Readings, video, discussion question, Ministry Praxis Concern draft
Week 4 2/9 – 2/15	Mardi Gras Holiday (no class)	
Week 5 2/16 – 2/22	Adult Education and Communication Skills	Complete readings, audios, discussion questions, Group Dynamics Assignment
Week 6 2/23 – 3/1	The Reflection Process	Complete readings, videos, discussion questions, Ministry Praxis Concern Assignment
Week 7 3/2 – 3/8	The Personal Context	Complete readings, videos, discussion questions, Keirsey Sorter, Personal Context Assignment
Week 8 3/9 – 3/15	The Sociocultural Context	Complete readings, videos, discussion questions, library research, Sociocultural Context Assignment
Week 9 3/16 – 3/22	The Christian Tradition Context	Complete readings, videos, journal, discussion questions
Week 10 3/23 – 3/29	Holy Week and Easter Holiday (no class)	
Week 11 3/30 – 4/5	The Institutional Context	Complete readings, videos, journal, discussion questions
Week 12 4/6 – 4/12	The Natural World Context	Complete readings, video, discussion questions, begin final paper
Week 13 4/13 – 4/19	Deciding	Work on final paper
Week 14 4/20 – 4/26	Wrap Up	Complete readings and discussion questions
Week 15 4/27 – 5/3	Working Break	

Week 16 5/4 – 5/10	Final Assignment and Course Evaluation	Reflective Essay due 12/1 by 11:59 pm CT

Tuesday, 5/18, Due date to post grades

Assessment

	Assignment	Percent of Grade	
		Graduate Students	CEU Students
1	Participation in Weekly Discussions	40%	85%
2	Spiritual Formation	5%	5%
3	Group Dynamics Assignment (Due at the end of Week Four)	5%	5%
4	Ministry Praxis (revised) Assignment (Due Week Five)	5%	Not required
5	Personal Context Assignment (Due at the end of Week Six)	5%	5%
6	Sociocultural Testing Assignment (Due at the end of Week Eight)	5%	Not required
7	Final Reflective Essay (Due Dec. 5)	35%	Not required

All students, those seeking graduate credit and those seeking continuing education units (CEU's), must participate in all course activities. This includes the weekly discussions, as well as the three short assignments (Spiritual Formation, Group Dynamics, and Personal Context) that are worth 5% each. Those seeking graduate credit must also complete the Ministry Praxis Assignment, Sociocultural Testing Assignment, and the Final Reflective Essay detailed below.

1) Participation in Weekly Sessions (40% of graduate student evaluation; 85% of CEU evaluation)

Each week of this course includes assignments for reading, audio segments (where applicable), videos, and discussion questions. These are provided in the weekly modules in Canvas. In addition to reading all the materials assigned and watching assigned videos, all students will also be expected to participate in the class discussions.

This course also offers a combination of the traditional asynchronous online course and synchronous webinars using Zoom. The majority of interaction will take place through threaded discussion, with a number of occasions for live webinars for all students over the course of the semester. Several times throughout the course, you will be invited to enter into a video class discussion in lieu of the written discussion board postings. Note: participation in the whole class video discussions are optional. You may also be asked to participate in one or two virtual small group sessions that you will initiate and assess, which would be

part of this participation grading.

Specific details regarding the schedule for posting, length requirements, discussion leaders, and small group meetings will be included in the final syllabus posted in Canvas the week of January 13, 2027

2) Spiritual Formation (5% of graduate and CEU evaluation)

Spiritual formation is an essential element of preparation for ministry. The LIM program attempts to integrate the spiritual growth of students into their theological education in a way that enriches their relationship with God and enlivens their ministry. Students will be given two prayer exercises, as well as other subject matter for prayer, and a minimum of two journal entries are required in Canvas. Detailed instructions in Canvas.

3) Group Dynamics Assignment: (5% of graduate and CEU student evaluation**)**

Students are asked to watch a series of video segments and comment accordingly. Due at the End of Week Five. Detailed instructions in Canvas.

4) Ministry Praxis Concern Assignment and Revision (5%)

Present your description and initial understanding of a concern related to your ministry praxis, or a concern that you feel called to address; this short assignment is due during Week Three. You will have an opportunity to revise it and submit it for credit in Week 6. Detailed instructions in Canvas.

5) Personal Context Assignment (5% of graduate and CEU student evaluation)

Presenting in writing feedback on communication skills and reflection on personal gifts. Due at the end of Week Six. Detailed instructions in Canvas.

6) Sociocultural Context Testing Assignment (5% of graduate student evaluation only)

Presenting in writing a "testing" or analyzing of your initial assumptions (as contrasted with "telling" or describing) based on relevant data and course material. This draft will be revised and incorporated into the final reflective essay. Detailed instructions in Canvas. Due at the end of Week Eight.

7) Final Reflective Essay (35% of graduate student evaluation only)

Using the reflection method and contextual model of practical theology presented in this course, reflect on your understanding of the concern you identified early in this course. The paper should present a *critical reflection* on your understanding the dynamics influencing this concern and of the Christian Tradition's implications regarding this concern. Full directions will be included in the Canvas course.

Grading Scale

A	93-100	**B-**	80-82.9	**D+**	67-69.9
A-	90-92.9	**C+**	77-79.9	**D**	60-66.9
B+	87-89.9	**C**	73-76.9	**F**	0-59.9
B	83-86.9	**C-**	70-72.9		

Overall Grading Scale

Letter Grade	Quality Points	Characteristics of Student Work
A	**4.0**	Work done with distinction. An outstanding use of all four evaluation criteria as a catalyst for critical reflection.
A-	**3.7**	Work done with distinction, with a few minor corrections needed.
B+	**3.3**	Work of very good quality. The assignment is addressed in an exceptional manner with a good balance of personal insight and academic documentation.
B	**3.0**	The standard for the master's degree. The assignment is adequately addressed in a clear and concise manner with appropriate documentation. If subsequent work meets this standard of quality, the degree will be awarded.
B-	**2.7**	The work is slightly below the standard for master's level work. The assignment is addressed, but a number of corrections is needed to address the assignment in a clear and concise manner. If subsequent work continues at this level, the student may not continue in the degree program.
C+	**2.3**	Substandard graduate work. Evaluation criteria are not adequately met in the assignment. Moderate improvement is needed. If subsequent work continues at this level, the student may not continue in the degree program.
C	**2**	Less than graduate-level work. Evaluation criteria are not met. If subsequent work continues at this level, the student may not continue in the degree program.
C-	**1.7**	Below average, grade does not count towards graduation.
D+	**1.3**	Minimally passing, grade does not count towards graduation.
D	**1**	Minimally passing, grade does not count towards graduation.
F	**0**	Assignment not addressed at all, incomplete assignment, or not submitted on time.

Please note that the LIM grading scale uses B as the standard for graduate-quality work. A and B+ indicate graduate work done with distinction, with B- and below signifying levels below graduate standards.

Course Policies

Incomplete Grade Policy

Students are subject to the university policy regarding incomplete grades with the following additions to university policy. Grades of Incomplete are given at the instructor's discretion. Students must complete LIM's Incomplete Grade Request Form found in the Resources » Policies, Forms, & Services section of their Canvas course. Students should first inquire of their instructor whether or not they are eligible for an incomplete; this must occur with

sufficient time to complete the process explained here. To be eligible, students may not have received an Incomplete in the previous semester, must have completed at least 75% of the course work to date, and must have at least a C or above in the course. After the instructor makes an initial assessment of eligibility, including checking with the LIM Office to ensure there was no Incomplete in the previous semester and finds the student eligible, by the due date of the course's final assignment, a student must complete and obtain all signatures for LIM's Incomplete Grade Request Form found in the Resources section of their Canvas course and submit it to their instructor, who will forward a copy to the LIM Director. LIM graduate students may not receive Incompletes in LIM courses in consecutive semesters.

Attendance & Participation

Students are subject to the university policy regarding attendance found online in the Bulletin. Students in online courses communicate their presence by active participation in weekly discussions. Each course's instructor sets requirements for how many times students must post on the Discussion Board in Canvas. Failing to post during the first week of class may result in removal from the course. If you foresee that you will be unable to post in a given week, please contact the instructor ahead of time. Extensions for posting are given at the instructor's discretion and for a valid reason may be granted if arranged ahead of time. In extraordinary circumstances, students may arrange with their instructor to post up to two weeks after a deadline, though this may entail a grade reduction. Posts and other assignments submitted more than two weeks late may be subject to a grade of zero. If students do not post in a given week, they are considered absent. Absence for more than one week without contacting the instructor may result in removal from and failure of the course.

University Policies

Please read Part 2 of the syllabus (located on LORA and in Canvas) for university policies on plagiarism, AI, accessible education, and more.