

DRAFT v2
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syllabus available in
Canvas January 7, 2026.

Loyola Institute for Ministry
Loyola University New Orleans

Introduction to Pastoral Care and Counseling

LIM-G849-Y1G0E

Spring 2026

Important! You will be notified by email to your Loyola email address when your course web site is available (normally the week before class begins). Please reply to the instructor's email when you receive it to confirm that you are ready to begin the course.

Course Description

This course is a religious and social psychological introduction to the basic stance of pastoral care and counseling. It explores how pastoral care and counseling are like and not like secular practices and articulates the unique characteristics of forms of care and counseling calling themselves pastoral.

Course Goals and Objectives

By the end of this course, you will be able to understand

- the definition of pastoral care as a spiritual practice.
- the historical and developing models of pastoral care.
- the skills that empathy and listening have in pastoral care and pastoral counseling.
- how sociological, developmental and intercultural factors impact the care-giver, care-seeker, and interpersonal dynamics of care.

Key Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, you will be better able to

- understand the concept of pastoral care and articulate the role(s) of the pastoral caregiver in the context of community.
- integrate personal contexts and identities with a developing pastoral care-giver identity.
- practice pastoral care skills in the context of the learning community.
- reflect theologically on pastoral care.

Required Readings

Please order the required texts as soon as possible from the [Loyola Bookstore](#) or another bookstore of your choice. Please order the editions listed below; check the ISBN number when ordering to ensure you purchase the correct edition of each text.

Doehring, C. *The Practice of Pastoral Care: A Postmodern Approach*. Revised and expanded edition, Westminster John Knox Press, 2015. ISBN-13: 978-0-664-238-407 List price: \$35.00 (Note: This edition is available as an ebook through Loyola's Monroe Library and is also available to read for free on the Internet Archive once you create an account <https://archive.org/details/practiceofpastor0000doeh/page/n1/mode/2up>)

Gaillardetz, Richard R. *While I Breathe, I Hope: A Mystagogy of Dying*. Edited by Grace M. Agolia, foreword by Michael Downey, Liturgical Press, 2024. ISBN-13: 978-0814688663 List price \$19.95 (Note: This edition is available as an ebook through Loyola's Monroe Library.)

Additional readings and media as included in the Canvas course.

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 11:59pm CT on Monday, the last day of the weekly session, except for Week 1; you must complete your personal introduction by Sunday, 1/18 by 11:59pm CT, or risk being administratively dropped from the course and complete the journal reflection by Tuesday, 1/20, 11:59 pm due to the Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday on 1/19.

Week	Topic	Assignments
Week 1 1/12 – 1/19	Welcome and Introductions (Jan. 19 Martin Luther King Jr's Birthday Holiday)	Complete readings and personal introduction
Week 2 1/20 – 1/26	What is Pastoral Care?	Complete readings and discussion questions
Week 3 1/27 – 2/2	Theological Roots, Historical and Developing Contexts for Pastoral Care	Complete readings and discussion questions
Week 4 2/3 – 2/9	Pastoral Care Approaches	Complete readings, media, discussion questions; attend optional synchronous webinar

Week 5 2/10 – 2/16	“To Know Thyself”: The Pastoral Care Giver	Complete readings, discussion questions; attend small-group virtual meeting, complete “This I Believe” assignment
Week 6 2/17 – 2/23	Mardi Gras Break	
Week 7 2/24 – 3/2	Cultivating Empathy and Compassion	Complete readings and discussion questions; attend optional synchronous webinar
Week 8 3/3 – 3/9	Honing the Skill of Listening	Complete readings, discussion questions
Week 9 3/10 – 3/16	Intercultural Communication	Complete readings and discussion questions; attend small-group virtual meeting
Week 10 3/17 – 3/23	Family Systems and Faith Development and Pastoral Care	Complete readings and discussion question; attend optional synchronous webinar
Week 11 3/24 – 3/30	Intersectionality and Pastoral Care	Complete readings and discussion questions
Week 12 3/31 – 4/6	Holy Week and Easter Holiday	
Week 13 4/7 – 4/13	Trauma-Informed Pastoral Care	Complete readings and discussion question
Week 14 4/14 – 4/20	Ethics and Pastoral Care	Graduate students work on final paper
Week 15 4/21 – 4/27	“While we breathe, we hope”: The necessity of hope in the work of pastoral care	Graduate students work on final paper, attend optional synchronous webinar, 100 day Project synthesis due.
Week 1 4/28 – 5/1	Final Assignment and Course Evaluation	Final Paper due 4/28 by 11:59 pm CT

Monday, May 11: due date for posting final grades

Assessment

Each student’s final grade will include the following parts:

		Percentage of Grade	
		Graduate	CEU
1	Substantive participation in weekly discussions and weekly assignments	50%	100%
2	100 Days Project	20%	—
3	Final Assignment	30%	—

1) Participation in Weekly Sessions (50% of Graduate Student evaluation; 100% of CEU evaluation)

The modules of this course include assignments for reading, video segments, and discussion questions. These are provided in the weekly modules in our Canvas course. In addition to reading all the materials assigned and watching assigned videos, all students will also be expected to participate in the class discussions online.

A leader for each group will be assigned each week to make the first post to the discussion questions no later than Friday night (11:59pm CT) of that week. You should read those posts and respond with your own response to the questions posted. Then, students are asked to read all posts from your assigned group and respond *substantively* to at least two of your colleagues' postings for each question (i.e., more than "I agree." or "I like your ideas."). Say why and include your own reflections on the readings, course materials, and experience. Ideally, each discussion will become a conversation. Be sure to check responses to your own postings and respond to any questions that others may have posed for you. You should post at least once by Saturday at midnight, and all posts must be posted by Monday at midnight central time.

You will also be asked to participate in two virtual small group sessions that you will initiate and assess. That is included as part of this participation grading.

Directions for Weekly Posting in Discussions

Please note: All times are Central Time.

For each Discussion assignment, students are required to make three (3) posts: a major post of 200-400 words in which they respond to the question posted, and two (2) minor posts of no more than 150-200 words each in which they respond to two (2) of the major posts made by their fellow students. In weeks where there are two discussion board questions, students are required to make one major post and two minor posts for each question (totaling 2 major, 4 minor posts). Our weekly sessions will run from Tuesday to Monday.

Beginning each Tuesday

- Read the overview for the week's work and begin individual work for the week. Questions that arise about the material may be addressed to me in the Question Board or via email.
- Contributions to Discussions should reflect critical engagement with both the required readings as well as any other assigned material and should demonstrate itself as such.

Before Friday at noon

- The first major post to the weekly discussion question is due before Friday at noon, for group leaders and by Saturday night (11:59pm CT) for everyone else. Some weeks require students to answer more than one question as a major post.
- Groups will be created and assigned by the second week. When this occurs, the

Group Discussion Leader posts a response to Discussion Question before end of Thursday night. This initial post by the Group Discussion Leader should also raise a question for the group to consider and be between 200- 400 words (Major post).

Before end of Saturday (11:59pm CT)

- Other members of the group respond to the weekly question by replying to the Discussion Leader's thread before Saturday night, of which should be between 200-400 words (Major post).

Before End of Monday (11:59pm CT)

- All students respond to two other posts in 150-200 words by Monday night (Minor posts).
- All members should have a total of three discussion posts by Monday night (one Major, two Minor) for each discussion board question.

Tuesday

- Read the Session announcement and begin reading and watching for the next week.

Contents of Discussion Post

The following bullet points can each result in a half letter grade reduction. To earn full credit, you should do the following things:

- post and respond by the deadline;
- adhere to word requirements;
- refrain from inappropriate posts (words/tones that diminish the character and community of the course) Practice using "I-statements," avoid generalizations by qualifying your words;
- provide content of substance based on the course material—that is, not comments such as "I agree wholeheartedly," but rather content that offers an original and informed contribution to the discussion, either as an opening or as a response, and reference course material;
- integrate (reference/cite) what you have read, how you understand the material, your experience, the remarks of your colleagues, and the course material;
- posting fully addresses the weekly questions and stimulates substantial follow-up postings;
- write in accessible prose—that is, not necessarily formal academic prose, but prose that is as clear and correct as you can make it, citing material not your own, and avoiding "text-speak" (using complete sentences rather than abbreviations and emoji to make your point, for example).

For a detailed explanation of the grading policy, please see the Rubric for Discussion Posts in Canvas on the Discussions and Groups page accessed from the course's Home page. I look forward to seeing your comments and insights in the discussions.

Spiritual Formation: 100-day Project (20%)

This course is rooted in compassionate presence, self-awareness, and reflective practice. This project will have you commit to doing a certain brief creative/spiritual practice for

100 days in a row and reflect on the experience at the end of the semester. There is room for creative expression in this project such as journaling, painting, playing a musical instrument, walking in nature, etc.

Final Project: Profile of a Pastoral Caregiver (30%)

The purpose of this assignment is to challenge you to step back and think critically about the backgrounds and identities you personally bring to pastoral care and how you hope to synthesize your learnings from the semester as you move forward in your ministries and studies. More details and specific instructions will be provided in Canvas.

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		

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.

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.

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 in Canvas) for university policies on plagiarism, accessible education, and more.