

DRAFT v1
Subject to change. Full
syllabus available in Canvas
Wednesday, August 13th.

Loyola Institute for Ministry
Loyola University New Orleans

Introduction to Ministry

RELM-C300-YA1
Fall 2026

Important: Please check your Loyola email account for an email from the instructor alerting you the course is open, then reply to that email confirming you are ready to begin the course. You received your Loyola Gmail address and how to access it in your welcome email from Loyola. Additional help on email is available at: <http://academicaffairs.loyno.edu/infotech/faq-gmail>. If you experience difficulties in finding your email address, please contact Loyola's Information Technology Help Desk ASAP: (504) 865-2255.

Students will need to log into Canvas to access this course; you also received information about this in your welcome email. Additional information about accessing Canvas is available at <https://researchguides.loyno.edu/canvas-logging-in>. If you need your welcome email resent, please contact Judy Lavergne at jflaverg@loyno.edu.

Course Description

Taking a broad view of ministry, this course introduces the study and practice of Christian ministry, grounded in Scripture and the historical tradition and focused on the contemporary challenges and opportunities.

Key Learning Outcomes

As a result of taking this course, students will be able to:

- recognize the call of all to discipleship and of some to lay ecclesial ministry.
- discuss the tradition and characteristics of lay ecclesial ministry.
- elaborate a theology of ministry.
- consider their role as leaders.
- engage in transformative theological reflection.
- appreciate and articulate the formation and formative power and significance of Earth as a unique chapter of the sacred story.
- commit themselves to action.

Required Texts

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

from the Loyola Bookstore.

Zeni Fox, editor. *Lay Ecclesial Ministry: Pathways Toward the Future*. Rowman and Littlefield, 2010. ISBN-13: 978-1-44-220-185-9 **Note:** This book is available in Canvas as an ebook whose pages you may read online and/or download.

Additional readings available in Canvas and through the Monroe Library.

Church and papal resources available for free online:

- [*Catechism of the Catholic Church*](#) (CCC)
- Pope Francis, [*Evangelii Gaudium*](#) (Joy of the Gospel) (EG)
- Pope Francis, [*Laudato Si'*](#) (LS)
- USCCB, [*Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord*](#) (CW)
- [*Lumen Gentium*](#) (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church) (LG)

What You Should Bring to This Course

Please come to our coursework in Ministry and Theology (MTH) with the habits of mind and spirit that will help you do these things:

- Be willing to reflect deeply on your ministry, your role in it, and how God may be calling you to grow in that ministry and your life.
- Be able to study and grow within our MTH intentional learning community, participating in its ongoing disciplined conversations.
- Organize your time so that you can be present online both early and often, surveying each week's work and completing tasks throughout the week instead of at the end (if everyone writes Blackboard posts on the last day, then there's no "conversation" at all, let alone "disciplined conversation").
- Share your authentic ideas, insights, and questions to all our interactions.
- Arrive online prepared, ready to listen (or read!) carefully, and able to contribute meaningfully to the conversation.

Evaluation and Course Requirements

Sequence of Topics/Calendar of Assignments

Week	Topic	Assignments
Week 1: 8/17 – 8/23	The Mission of the Baptized	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal Introduction • Assigned readings • Video • Discussion Questions 1 and 2
Week 2: 8/24 – 8/30	Thinking Theologically and Practically	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assigned Readings • Video • Discussion Questions 1 & 2 • Initial Understanding of Ministry Journal
Week 3 8/31-9/6	Critical Reflection and the Overlooked “Obvious”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assigned readings • Videos • Discussion Questions 1 and 2 • Current Events & Ministry Journal 1
Week 4: 9/7 – 9/13	<i>Co-Workers</i> (Sept. 7, Labor Day Holiday)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assigned readings • Videos • Discussion Questions 1 and 2 • Prayer Journal 1
Week 5: 9/14 – 9/20	Responses to <i>Co-Workers</i> and Ministry in the New Testament	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assigned readings • Videos • Discussion Questions 1 and 2
Week 6: 9/21 – 9/27	History and Ritual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assigned readings • Discussion Question • Current Events & Ministry Journal 2
Week 7: 9/28 – 10/4	Models and Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assigned readings • Video • Discussion Questions 1 and 2, Ministry Leadership Inventory Response • Prayer Journal 2
Week 8: 10/5 – 10/11	Final Exam Preparation	
Final Exam 10/12 – 10/18	Exam due Thursday, 10/15 by 11:59 pm Central Time (Oct. 12-13, Fall Holiday)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete and submit final exam

Sept. 16: Due date for posting Mid-term Grades 11:59 pm CT

Oct. 20: Due date for posting Final Grades 11:59 pm CT

Week One Assignments

- 1) Read overview, view video, read assigned texts
 - [*Lumen Gentium*](#), chapters 4 and 5
 - Francis, [*Evangelii Gaudium*](#), #1-49, #110-34 (numbers refer to paragraph numbers in EG)
 - [*Catechism of the Catholic Church*](#), #1-10, #25, #897-913, #1544-1547 (numbers refer to paragraph numbers in the CCC)
 - Edward P. Hahnenberg, “Apostolate, Ministry, Mission: The Legacy of Vatican II’s Teaching on the Laity.” *Toronto Journal of Theology*, vol. 32, no. 2, 2016, pp. 233-49 (file located in Canvas)
- 2) Participate in Discussions on Canvas:
 - Introduce oneself and greet one’s fellow students
 - Respond to Discussion Questions 1 and 2
- 3) Complete the Initial Understanding of Ministry Journal

Assessment

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

		Percentage of Grade
1	Substantive participation in weekly discussion via online postings	50%
2	Journals (Spiritual Formation / Current Events and Ministry)	16%
3	Ministry Inventory	4%
4	Final Exam	30%

1) Substantive participation in weekly discussion via online postings (50%)

As in all RELM courses, the strength of our program is the intentional learning community and its ongoing invitation to disciplined conversation. Through the online courses you will be part of an intentional learning community that will carry on extended and disciplined conversation by way of the internet.

A discussion is an “asynchronous” or time-independent application. This means that generally you will have no set times or schedules when you must be in class on any particular day. It is up to you to determine when to log in and post during the course of a week, within the parameters of the given weekly deadlines. You are expected to log in to this class several times a week to read the comments of your instructor and fellow students and to post your required comments. Except for the last week, each weekly session runs from 12:01 a.m. US Central Monday until 11:59 p.m. Central the following Sunday. The final session ends at 11:59 p.m. Central on October 17. Late posts are subject to reduced grade or to a grade of 0. Please consult with your professor about any foreseen or unforeseen absence from the course.

Each week several Discussion Leaders will help initiate the flow of the conversation. The task of the Discussion Leader is simply to post first. S/he will essentially begin the conversation around the given question(s) for the week by posting her response to the session question; everyone else assigned to that group will respond on that same thread. In at least one of your responses, you will also offer your own reflections on the question (perhaps in addition to your response to the discussion question). Each week you will be able to earn four points for each question, for your weekly participation; this includes your response to the assigned question(s), as well as the thoughtful replies you are asked to make to your colleagues' posts.

All students are expected to contribute at least three substantive responses for each question. Lead students post their initial reflections by Wednesday; everyone who is not a lead student should post at least once by Friday.

Posting

Contributions to Discussions should be the fruit of, and therefore demonstrate, a critical engagement with the course assignments. To achieve this, you are asked to note comments, questions, observations, reflections, insights that surface as the natural result of thoughtful reading. Your weekly postings should be substantive and respect the word limit posted for each week's questions. A substantive response will include both your own reflections on the question and some interaction with course materials you're your fellow students' reflections. Please include references to the course materials to indicate this interaction; include a parenthetical reference with at least the name of the material or the author and, if possible a page number (e.g., Groome 15; Hahnenberg video). Please also alert your readers when you refer to other outside sources, such as other books or websites.

Your replies to your colleagues should also be substantive: "I agree" or "I like what you posted" or something similar is not a substantive comment. Please articulate what about their posting is compelling to you, the connections you make with the assigned material for the week, and why you consider their comment relevant, challenging, important, etc. Ideally, each discussion thread will become a conversation. (If you have a comment that you would like to make to a colleague that is not related to the discussion, you may either post it in the "Student Lounge" Discussion (accessible from the course homepage) or send an email to the student via the People section of the course.)

Asking Questions

One of the most effective tools of a good online discussion is the question. Communication in the online medium can be easily misinterpreted. It can be challenging to effectively convey tone and nuance in an online discussion. This can sometimes lead to misunderstanding, conflict and frustration in the learning group. But this does not have to be the case! When in doubt about the meaning of a posting, please ask questions before making assumptions or jumping to conclusions. Even if the meaning seems straightforward, it is good practice to ask follow-up questions and/or questions for clarification. Questions will also help to discussions deepening our conversations and reflections.

In sum, what should your Discussion posts look like?

- Your posts should always be substantive, meaning focused, succinct, and worth reading. Keep in mind that we all have to read these posts!
- Your posts should bring your own experience into conversation with our course materials and with what the other members of the learning community are saying, and they should always directly address the question at hand.
- Your responses should also be critical, meaning that the conversation should also generate questions, requests for clarification, and other methods of deepening the discussion. As you can see, remarks like “I loved your post” or “I agree wholeheartedly” are NOT substantive posts!
- In addition to being substantive, our online conversations should also be authentic—that is, anything that you say online should be something that you would say if we were all sitting around a table in a physical room.

2) Journal Entries (16%)

Spiritual Formation Journals

In weeks 4 and 7, you will submit in Canvas a 300+-word journal entry in light of your prayer and other material in the spiritual formation prompts found in the Canvas course. You will also be asked to reflect on your experience of prayer on the final exam. Late submissions are subject to reduced grade or to a grade of 0. Full directions will be included in the final syllabus posted in Canvas the week of August 12th.

Current Events and Ministry Journals

In weeks 3 and 6, you will submit in Canvas a 400+-word journal entry on different articles at least 2 pages or 700 words in length. The articles must come from *America Magazine: The Jesuit Review*, *First Things: Journal of Religion and Public Life*, or *Commonweal: A Review of Religion, Politics and Culture*. All three are available full text online through Loyola’s library. A free subscription to *Commonweal* is available to you at <https://subscribe.commonwealmagazine.org/CMW/?f=studdig>. Late submissions are subject to reduced grade or to a grade of 0. Full directions will be included in the final syllabus posted in Canvas the week of August 12th.

3) Ministry Inventory (4%)

Directions for completing the inventory and submitting your reflection on it are available in the Canvas course. Late submissions are subject to reduced grade or to a grade of 0.

4) Final Exam (30%)

You will complete an open-book final exam in order to synthesize what you’ve learned in this class in the service of a ministry or a concern in a 9-13 paper plus a Works Cited page. Late

submission is subject to reduced grade or to a grade of 0. You will receive precise instructions for the exam 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	63-66.9
B+	87-89.9	C	73-76.9	F	0-62.99
B	83-86.9	C-	70-72.9		

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.

Tentatively, there will be two **optional video conferences** during the course. To participate, students will need access to a computer with a web camera and microphone, and earphones or earbuds. More information will be included in the Canvas course.

University Policies

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

Opportunities

Organizations

You should consider taking advantage of educational/professional opportunities that include the College Theology Society, the Religious Education Association, the National Association of Lay Ministry, and the National Conference of Catechetical Leadership, the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions, the National Association of Pastoral Musicians, the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry, the National Catholic Education Association.