Overview, Expectations and Course Paper

The major paper for this spring semester of the second year colleague group is a preliminary draft of your/a D.Min major ministry project proposal. Toward that end we will give attention in class to:

- How individuals and organizations/congregations change.
- The interrelationships among theology, context and action.
- The situation in your ministry setting with which your major project draft will deal and the outcomes related to that situation for which you hope.
- What the literature has to say about the nature of the outcomes you envision and how to realize them.
- Putting all the pieces of a project proposal into a coherent and defensible document.

As a reminder, the seminary catalogue says the following about “The Ministry Project” and related proposal:

The Ministry Project will involve the design, implementation, and evaluation of an action in ministry and reflection on its process and outcome. It should address a significant situation or issue within the student’s ministry setting and set out a strategy to effect change in that setting, transforming and/or intensifying the faith and practice of the religious community. . .

Students who have successfully completed Colleague Seminars I and II and at least four of the six elective courses, and have the approval of their advisor, may submit a Ministry Project Proposal for oral examination by a committee of the faculty. Committee members are chosen by the Dean of the Seminary and will include the student’s advisor and two readers. The examining committee’s approval of the proposal constitutes admission to candidacy for the Doctor of Ministry degree.

Students will submit a 20-25 page Project Proposal for this exam. This proposal should demonstrate the student’s ability to draw widely and deeply on work they have done in the Colleague Seminars and other courses in the program, strategically integrating that learning around the particular action in ministry the student proposes to undertake.

The proposal should begin with a succinct statement of what the student hopes to accomplish, followed by 1) explicit attention to and grounding in the student’s context of ministry, showing how the proposed project addresses and grows out of the social realities internal and external to that specific place; 2) an explication of the theology that calls forth the proposed project’s action, including attention to scholarly sources and sacred traditions, to relevant theoretical analyses, and to the student’s own experiences and convictions; 3) a detailed outline of the actions the student wishes to undertake, showing how those actions are grounded in an understanding of the specific practices of ministry the student will use; and 4) a brief description of how the student plans to evaluate the proposed Ministry Project.

Process Expectations:

- Timely and regular attendance. If an emergency comes up (and they do), call or email me or call the main seminary number (860/509-9500) and leave word. The seminary’s policy is a maximum of one and a half day-long session absences for a five-session DMin course.
• Prepared and active participation in class presentations and discussions (in a sense, this course is a peer learning group with the instructor as coach)

• Commitment to dialogical engagement of one’s colleagues:
  o Open sharing of one’s own perspectives and respectful probing of other’s perspectives
  o Appreciative understanding of other’s perspective/argument before offering suggestions for further consideration (a DMin project is a “constructive” effort; therefore constructive suggestions are most helpful)
  o Appreciative consideration of other’s suggestions.

• What is said in the group stays in the group!

Office Hours:  By Appointment.  Email is the best way to contact me, even for scheduling appointments to talk on the phone or meet at the seminary.

Class Grade:

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<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Class participation</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<td>Attendance at and active participation in every class session is expected of all students. Exceptions are only allowed if advance permission has been granted by the instructor, and only for unavoidable absences. In all cases, failure to be in attendance at more than one class session automatically precludes successful completion of the course. This portion of the grade includes the four discussion topic periods and fieldwork exercises in class.</td>
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| Writing assignments        | 30%        |
| Completion of all of the minor writing assignments (i.e., the three “Fieldwork reports”) is essential to advance the learning in this course, and must reflect the details of the assignment sheet distributed at the end of the previous class session. Excepting the “Introductory statement,” all writing assignments must be sent by e-mail to the instructor by the Friday immediately before the class session for which they are assigned. |

| Final paper                | 45%        |
| The final paper integrates the central methods, insights, readings, and findings from the semester into a practical theological framework. This paper will return and extend the retreat assignment dealing with changing something in one’s ministry setting, either the “something” initially treated for the retreat assignment or something different. Details for the final paper, including focus and format, will be provided at the 16 November class session. Final papers must be sent by e-mail to the instructor by 11 January 2010. |
Preliminary
Class Schedule & Assignments
Written assignments are to be brought to class on the indicated date


**Jan 26, Session 1: The D.Min Major Ministry Project Proposal**
- **Read:**
  - Guidelines for Doctor of Ministry Project Proposals and Examination. Online
  - “Introduction” (pp 1-30) to Richard Robert Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction*
- **Written Assignment:** Five page maximum analysis of the Wuthnow chapter that answers the following questions:
  - Where do you see theology connecting to action in the chapter? Of these connections, which seem healthy/appropriate? Which not? What criteria have you used in making such assessments?
  - Where do you see context or the nature of the ministry setting connecting to action? Of these connections, which seem healthy/appropriate? Which not? What criteria have you used in making such assessments?

**Feb 13, Session 2: What, Where and Why**

**What:** The Ministry Project will involve the design, implementation, and evaluation of an action in ministry. That is, you are going to do something, introducing something new into your ministry. What you do should address a significant situation or issue within your ministry setting, something that you and your partners in ministry care about. The project should set out a strategy to effect change that will transform and/or intensify the faith and practice of your ministry community. **The Proposal should begin with a succinct statement of what you hope to accomplish. What are your goals, and how will your project move toward those goals?**

**Read:** “Chapter 1” (pp 31-78) in Osmer, *Practical Theology*

**Written Assignment 1:** Two paragraphs on no more than one page, one paragraph describing the SITUATION IN YOUR MINISTRY SETTING THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO CHANGE through your ministry project; and the second paragraph describing the SITUATION THAT YOU HOPE WILL RESULT because of your ministry project.

**Where:** You should give explicit attention to how this Project addresses and grows out of the realities internal and external to your setting of ministry. Why this project in this place? What do you understand about the social and cultural realities of your setting that has helped you think about how to lead toward
change? Here you should be drawing on the work you did in your first year Colleague Seminar.

- **Written Assignment 2:** Two paragraphs on no more than one page, one paragraph explaining, WHY THIS PROJECT IN THIS PLACE; and the second paragraph describing BRIDGES AND BARRIERS IN YOUR MINISTRY SETTING TO ACCOMPLISHING THE CHANGE YOU HOPE FOR.

**Why:** How does what you believe about the nature of church, ministry, and God’s activity in the world warrant the change you hope for?

- **Written Assignment 3:** Answer the above question in no more than two succinct paragraphs.

**March 16, Session 3: What Others Have To Say About Accomplishing What You Hope For**

*On what theoretical and practical wisdom are you drawing?* How are your actions grounded in an understanding of the specific practices of ministry you will use? For example, what theories of learning, change, conflict management, communication, spiritual formation, etc., are relevant to your work?

- **Read:** “Chapter 2” (pp 79 - 128) in Osmer, *Practical Theology*
- **Written Assignment 1:** Chose two books that address the ministry area of change you will be addressing in your project, but that address the area from very different perspectives. Write a five page comparative analysis that explicates the differences between the perspectives (including their related rational and assumptions) in regard to:
  
  a. The substantive nature of the change sought (that is, the ministry/programmatic outcomes); and
  
  b. The implementation processes or action/change strategies that one could use to realize the change.

Also note the similarities and their related rational.

- **Written Assignment 2:** Chose two ministry practitioners that have dealt with the ministry area of change you will be addressing in your project, but that address the area from very different perspectives. Write a five page comparative analysis that explicates the differences between the perspectives (including their related rational and assumptions) in regard to:
  
  c. The substantive nature of the change sought (that is, the ministry/programmatic outcomes); and
  
  d. The implementation processes or action/change strategies that one could use to realize the change.

Also note the similarities and their related rational.

**April 13, Session 4: Transformative Actions**

**Warm-up:**

- **Read:** “Chapter 4” (pp 175-218) in Osmer, *Practical Theology*
- **Read:** Selected pages in Blake and Mouton’s, *Consultation: A Handbook for Individual and Organizational Development*, email attachment.
• **Written Assignment 1:** I presume that all of you are in some way Arminian in your theology of humankind, and therefore believe in human agency – that is, believe in the capacity for human beings to make choices and to impose those choices on the world. Presuming this I would like you to bring to class to share with your colleagues a one page reflection on what YOUR THEOLOGY and YOUR LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE tell you about (1) HOW individuals make decisions and act on them, and therefore (2) HOW a congregational leader can motivate or otherwise direct a GROUP of persons in the congregation to do something new or different.

**Proposal Action Plan:** There should be a detailed outline of the transformative actions you wish to undertake. This need not be a complete set of all the plans and resources, but it should include sufficient detail to make clear how you actually hope to achieve your goals. What do you actually plan to do? Additional supporting details (e.g., sample sermon outlines, lesson plans, event descriptions, and the like) may be added in an appendix. This outline will normally be 3-5 pages in length.

Having described what you are going to do, you should discuss why you have chosen these particular strategies.

• **Written Assignment 2:** Write a detailed outline of the transformative actions you wish to undertake.
• **Written Assignment 3:** Discuss, in two to three pages, why you have chosen these particular strategies.

**May 11, Session 5: Theology of Change and Evaluation Methodology**

• **Read:** “Chapter 3” (pp 129-174) in Osmer, *Practical Theology*
• **Written Assignment 1:** Discuss, in two to three pages, how your transformative actions relate to what you believe about the nature of church, ministry, and God’s activity in the world.
• **Written Assignment 2:** In one to two pages, briefly describe how you plan to evaluate the proposed Ministry Project. How will you know what happened and why? What will count as “success” and why? How will you gather information on the experience of participants? What sorts of changes will you be watching for?
• **Written Assignment 3:** You should end with a brief statement about what sort of support you have for the Project from (1) those in your ministry setting (both participants in the project and support for/ownership of the project by your governing board) and (2) various Seminary and other advisors. Who will be helping you, and how will they be doing it? This will usually be a long paragraph.

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**Course Paper Due Two Weeks after last class:** A complete draft of a Ministry Project Proposal.