

# **SYLLABUS**

## **Pastoral Counseling 02PT5350**

August 29 – November 28, 2023 ~ Tuesdays, 2:00-5:00pm  
Reformed Theological Seminary – Orlando

Instructor: **Rev. Mike Osborne**, Dean of Students  
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Office Hours: By appointment

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This class provides basic preparation for the complex task of pastoral care and counseling. The focus is upon the pastor in the congregational setting. Students will formulate a biblical and theological foundation for the practice of pastoral counseling. They will grow in self-awareness, develop an understanding of the key principles of pastoral care, and acquire skills required for providing Christian care and follow-up. Numerous pastoral themes and practical challenges are addressed through outside reading, lectures, projects, and peer interaction. Students will be encouraged to develop their own pastoral presence in offering spiritual care.

### **LEARNING OBJECTIVES:**

Upon successful completion of this course:

- Students will be able to articulate a biblical framework for pastoral counseling and soul care;
- Students will have engaged their own story and begun to understand how it impacts their ability to relate to and care for others;
- Students will have learned critical skills to facilitate effective counseling;
- Students will have begun to develop a biblical, practical, compassionate approach to the most common pastoral counseling situations.

### **COURSE MATERIALS:**

**A. Required Reading** – Read the latest editions of the following books and articles:

1. *Connecting with Self and Others* (1992), by Miller, Wackman, Nunnally, and Miller
2. *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship: Moving from Shallow Christianity to Deep Transformation* (2021), by Peter Scazzero
3. *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands* (2002), by Paul D. Tripp
4. *The Elements of Counseling* (2019), by Meier and Davis
5. Dan Allender article, "What's Wrong with Us?"  
<http://www.leaderu.com/marshall/mhr04/wrong1.html>
6. Tim Keller article, "Four Models of Counseling in Pastoral Ministry"  
[https://c4265878.ssl.cf2.rackcdn.com/redeemer.1709191425.Four\\_Models\\_of\\_Counseling\\_in\\_Pastoral\\_Ministry.pdf](https://c4265878.ssl.cf2.rackcdn.com/redeemer.1709191425.Four_Models_of_Counseling_in_Pastoral_Ministry.pdf)

**B. Recommended Reading (needed for Case Study Assignment, below)**

*Facing Messy Stuff in the Church: Case Studies for Pastors and Congregations* (2005),  
by Kenneth L. Swetland

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

### **A. Emotionally Healthy Spirituality Personal Assessment Report: Due Saturday, September 16, by 11:59pm**

Each student is expected to complete the Emotionally Healthy Spirituality (EHS) Personal Assessment (file uploaded in Canvas). After completing the assessment, report your results using the scale at the end of the document and write a two- to three-page (typed, double-spaced) paper in which you: (a) share insights you have gained about yourself through this exercise; (b) describe at least one action step you will take during this semester to improve in the weakest area of your emotional/spiritual health as indicated by this assessment; and (c) include in your action plan the name of an accountability partner and how you and this partner will plan to work together.

### **B. Life Graph: Due Tuesday, October 3, by 2:00pm**

Each student is expected to graph the highs and lows of his or her life using a simple timeline. Draw a horizontal line beginning with date of birth and ending with present day. Graph the significant peaks and valleys of your life with dots and brief explanations and draw lines to connect the dots, similar to this example: <https://www.virtualspeechcoach.com/digging-up-stories-highs-and-lows-graph/>. Include at least five high and five low points on your graph. Be prepared to share insights you have gained from this exercise in class with a partner or small group.

### **C. Case Study Assignment: Due Saturday, October 21, by 11:59pm**

The book, *Facing Messy Stuff in the Church* by Kenneth L. Swetland, contains fourteen chapters, each one a case study of a conceivable pastoral counseling situation. Students must choose TWO of those case studies and write a 3- to 5-page (typed, double-spaced) paper containing thorough, thoughtful answers to the questions listed at the end of each chapter.

### **D. Experiential Learning Project: Due Saturday, November 18, by 11:59pm**

Each student is expected to complete ONE of the following projects:

**OPTION 1:** Visit a local place of human suffering or need and write a 5- to 7-page (typed, double-spaced) paper describing: (a) what you did, (b) what you asked, (c) whom you met, (d) how you felt during the experience, (e) what you learned about yourself, and (f) how the experience might inform your approach to pastoral counseling. The point of this exercise is to be personally impacted by the experience and better understand the challenges faced by a significant segment of society. **Students should submit their Experiential Learning Project proposal via email for the Instructor's approval and feedback before proceeding.** You can consider doing something like the following:

- Visit a nursing home or assisted living facility, interview the manager, and visit with residents.
- Interview a hospital chaplain and shadow him or her for a day.
- Sit in on an SA meeting and interview someone who struggles with same-sex attraction or sex addiction.
- Sit in on an AA meeting and interview an alcoholic or drug addict and his or her sponsor.

- Tour a funeral home and interview one of the morticians.
- Visit a homeless shelter or help at a soup kitchen and interview a homeless person.

Students are encouraged to use creativity and take initiative to come up with a project that gets them out of their comfort zone and exposes them to the real struggles of others. Your paper must reflect personal engagement and sincere effort to see yourself and the suffering of others in a new light. Do not use up space in your paper describing the history, organization, and activities of the place you visit. Focus instead on your personal experience, feelings, and insights for future ministry.

**OPTION 2:** Create a Community Mental Health Resources Notebook for use by the pastoral care ministry in your current or future church. (NOTE: If you already have access to such a notebook you may not choose this option.) Your notebook should include descriptions of and contact information for each resource, be well organized and easily used as a quick reference guide to agencies, counselors, clinics, government services, and ministries available in your area to meet a wide variety of mental, spiritual, physical, and emotional needs. Consider such things as pregnancy crisis centers, rape and suicide hotlines, domestic violence shelters, food pantries, senior services, and so on. Notebooks will be evaluated on their thoroughness, organization, and effort shown.

**OPTION 3:** Create a six-week premarital counseling course for a Christian engaged couple. The finished product should be a manual or notebook displaying core concepts, biblical teaching, practical skills, reading material, and homework assignments in logical fashion. Think of this manual or notebook as being given to the couple at the first counseling session. What subjects would you choose to cover? What skills would you want to teach? What resources would you want to give the couple? The goal of the course should be to help couples understand God's design for marriage and begin to establish healthy patterns in their relationship. You are free to include in the notebook outside resources, articles, and exercises, but the overall content should be your work showing creativity and thoughtful engagement with the many aspects of a building a healthy marriage.

**E. Reading Report: Due Monday, December 4, by 11:59pm**

Each student is expected to finish the Required Reading before the end of the semester. Students will be graded based on a self-report according to the following rubric:

	Percentage of each book or article read
	Read by the deadline of December 4, 2023 (yes or no)

A Reading Report form is uploaded in Canvas. It must be filled out and uploaded to Canvas by the deadline stated above.

**F. Reading Reflection Paper: Due Monday, December 4, by 11:59pm**

Each student is expected to write a 6- to 8-page reflection paper (typed, double-spaced) about the four textbooks (not the two articles) on the Required Reading list (max. 2 pages

per book). Your paper should contain brief answers to the following questions: (a) In one sentence, how would you summarize each book? (b) What were (for you) the three most impactful ideas, statements, or principles in each book? These can be stated in bullet points. (c) What is one practical way you might implement each of those three impactful ideas in your pastoral care ministry?

### **LATE ASSIGNMENTS**

Assignments will be expected by the due date. Exceptions should be addressed to the instructor in advance of the due date.

### **ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION**

It is expected that students will be present for all class sessions. Notify the instructor if you find you must miss part or all of a session. A portion of your grade is determined by punctuality and how engaged you are in class discussion and peer interaction.

### **GRADES**

There will be no graded exams or quizzes in this class. Final grades will be based on the degree to which your work shows personal application, effort, and serious engagement. The following chart shows how the final grade will be calculated:

ITEM	PERCENTAGE
Reading Report	15%
Life Graph	10%
Reading Reflection Paper	15%
Emotionally Healthy Spirituality Assessment Report	15%
Case Study Project	15%
Experiential Learning Project	20%
Class Attendance & Participation	10%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>

The grading scale employed at Reformed Theological Seminary is as follows:

A	97-100	4.00
A-	94-96	3.66
B+	91-93	3.33
B	88-90	3.00
B-	86-87	2.66
C+	83-85	2.33
C	80-82	2.00
C-	78-79	1.66
D+	75-77	1.33
D	72-74	1.00
D-	70-71	0.66
F	below 70	0.00
I	incomplete	
W	withdraw	

S      satisfactory  
P      passing

The grade “I” indicates that the work required for the course was not completed. It is given only when special, extenuating circumstances (such as illness) prevent the student from completing the work or taking the examination. A written request for an extension must be submitted prior to the due date of the work concerned. If the request is granted, it remains the responsibility of the student to complete all work for the course as soon as possible. In any case, an “I” grade must be removed within the extension time granted; otherwise it will be changed to “F.” The grade “W” indicates that a student has withdrawn from a course after the drop deadline. This grade is granted by the academic dean only in extenuating circumstances. The grade “P” is only used as a Pass/Fail option and is limited to the Field Education course.

## Course Objectives Related to MDiv\* Student Learning Outcomes

Course: Pastoral Counseling 02PT5350    Campus: Orlando    Date: Fall 2023    Professor: Mike Osborne

<b>MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes</b> <i>In order to measure the success of the MDiv curriculum, RTS has defined the following as the intended outcomes of the student learning process. Each course contributes to these overall outcomes. This rubric shows the contribution of this course to the MDiv outcomes.</i> <i>*As the MDiv is the core degree at RTS, the MDiv rubric will be used in this syllabus.</i>		<b>Rubric</b> ➤ Strong ➤ Moderate ➤ Minimal ➤ None	<b>Mini-Justification</b>
<b>Articulation (oral &amp; written)</b>	Broadly understands and articulates knowledge, both oral and written, of essential biblical, theological, historical, and cultural/global information, including details, concepts, and frameworks.	Moderate	Students must articulate a framework for counseling derived from Scripture and sound theology.
<b>Scripture</b>	Significant knowledge of the original meaning of Scripture. Also, the concepts for and skill to research further into the original meaning of Scripture and to apply Scripture to a variety of modern circumstances. (Includes appropriate use of original languages and hermeneutics; and integrates theological, historical, and cultural/global perspectives.)	Strong	Pastoral counseling must be grounded in what the Bible reveals about the nature of God and man, our fallen condition, and the path to redemption and healing.
<b>Reformed Theology</b>	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	Moderate	Reformed theology is woven throughout counseling. The WCF addresses counseling issues and concerns.
<b>Sanctification</b>	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification.	Strong	Students must deal with their own issues in order to counsel others.
<b>Desire for Worldview</b>	Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God.	Strong	Counseling must be done in ways consistent with a biblical worldview.
<b>Winsomely Reformed</b>	Embraces a winsomely Reformed ethos. (Includes an appropriate ecumenical spirit with other Christians, especially Evangelicals; a concern to present the Gospel in a God-honoring manner to non-Christians; and a truth-in-love attitude in disagreements.)	Strong	Counseling is connected with evangelism. Students compassionately bring the gospel to bear on human problems in Christ's name.
<b>Preach</b>	Ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.	None	
<b>Worship</b>	Knowledgeable of historic and modern Christian-worship forms; and ability to construct and skill to lead a worship service.	Moderate	Worship is ultimately the goal of Christian counseling.
<b>Shepherd</b>	Ability to shepherd the local congregation: aiding in spiritual maturity; promoting use of gifts and callings; and encouraging a concern for non-Christians.	Strong	This course prepares pastors and counselors to shepherd the flock well.
<b>Church/World</b>	Ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues.	Minimal	A vibrant counseling ministry overflows to other churches and the community.

