



**PT5350-D1 Pastoral Counseling
3 Credit Hours**

Spring 2026, (3/9 - 3/12/2026)
Monday-Thursday 9 AM - 5 PM,
Reformed Theological Seminary: Dallas

Professor Information

Keith A. Evans, PhD
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course introduces students to biblical pastoral counseling from a distinctly Reformed theological framework. It establishes the biblical foundations that shape a faithful counseling methodology, contrasts biblical counseling with competing approaches, and demonstrates how theology informs pastoral practice. The course introduces core counseling skills and applies them to common counseling concerns, including conflict, anger, fear, anxiety, depression, and suffering, with emphasis on the wise and faithful application of Scripture in church and parachurch settings.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of this course, the student will be able to:

- A. Articulate the biblical and theological foundations of a Reformed approach to counseling
- B. Evaluate and distinguish biblical counseling from other approaches to soul care
- C. Apply Scripture to personal growth and self-counsel in Christ
- D. Demonstrate a basic methodology for biblical pastoral counseling
- E. Employ Scripture wisely in addressing common pastoral counseling concerns

COURSE MATERIALS

Reading:

1. Adams, Jay E. *A Theology of Christian Counseling: More Than Redemption*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1986
2. Emlet, Michael R. *CrossTalk: Where Life & Scripture Meet*. Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2009
3. Tripp, Paul D. *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands: People in Need of Change Helping People in Need of Change*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2002

The expectation is that students will read every word of these books to receive full reading credit. Students will be graded based on their self-reporting in the reading summaries described below.

ASSIGNMENTS AND ASSESSMENTS

This course is entirely electronic for the submission of assignments. Each assignment will be uploaded to Canvas in the appropriate portal. If you are unfamiliar with this process, make sure you schedule a time in advance with the professor or TA to learn how to use Canvas.

1. Reading Interaction Papers

Students are to turn in a two page-double spaced paper, for each book read. State the percentage read of each book according to the following guide:

1. Percentage of the book read, word-for-word; 2. Percentage of the book skimmed. Then for the paper itself, page one will consist of a summary of the salient points of the book. Capture the thesis as well as the main points of the author's argument. Write it in such a way that if the author of the book read your summary, he could agree you understood what he was saying. Page two will be your personal interaction with the book—how was it useful to you, is it applicable in your ministry, were there things you found helpful or problematic, etc. We will discuss the books in class.

2. Extra Canvas Readings

In addition to the above books, several articles or chapter excerpts will be included on Canvas for students to read and interact with during the class discussion time:

1. *Thoughts on Religious Experience*, by Archibald Alexander, Chapter IV on "Melancholy."
2. "Cure of Souls and the Modern Psychotherapies" by David Powlison, *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 25, no. 2 (2007).
3. "The Ambiguously Cured Soul." By David Powlison, *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 19, no. 3 (2001).

No interaction papers are due for chapter/articles, but students will be expected to interact during the class discussion time on the content of the chapter/articles.

3. Case Studies

In Canvas you will find a document of case studies. Choose two of the cases to interact with. Type up a one-page summary of each case study selected, detailing the following:

1. What significant data do you currently know? (Do not simply repeat the details of the case study, instead explain why the data you cite is significant.)
2. What questions would you ask in order to gather further data? (In other words: ask yourself what significant data you are lacking (but need) in order to counsel this case accurately. Then, write out questions you would ask the counselee in order to uncover this data.)
3. How would you begin to give hope from the Scriptures, pertinent to the circumstances in the case?
4. What preparation(s) would you assign the counselee after your first counseling session?

Do not complete the above case study elements as though you are telling your professor what you would do. Instead, write out your assessment as though they are your notes in preparation for your first session with the counselee.

4. Observation Videos

On Canvas there are two IBCD Observation Videos to view. Watch them and take notes on the methodology of counseling being demonstrated in these videos. Write a one or two-page, double spaced paper, summarizing what stood out to you about the counseling. (Please, do not reiterate blow-by-blow what happened in the videos. I have watched the videos and know what they contain, so there is no need to re-tell me what happened. Instead, highlight the methods employed by the counselor and why that's significant.) Feel free to speak to the content, demeanor, strategies, etc. (Please note: only one paper needs to be completed summarizing your "take-aways" from both videos. Do not submit two separate papers.)

5. Final Exam

The final exam will be posted to Canvas during finals week. While the exam will be "take home" style, a proctor will need to be secured according to RTS policy, and the exam may only be taken with an open, unmarked Bible, nothing else.

5. Class Attendance and Participation

Please attend each class and be prepared to participate in class discussion. Class participation factors into your final grade. Come to the course prepared to interact about each of the articles/chapter in Canvas. Interacting about the articles' contents during the course factors significantly into your final participation grade.

Late Assignments

Assignments are due as indicated on Canvas under the assignments. Assignments not submitted on time are considered late and are penalized 3% for the first day late, and 1% for each day late thereafter.

Extensions Policy for Assignments: In extenuating circumstances, a deadline extension of **up to one week** may be granted at the discretion of the professor. Requests for extensions of **more than one week** must be submitted to the Registrar for consideration by the Academic Dean in consultation with the professor. Extensions are granted only for significant emergencies or unforeseen circumstances, and a grade penalty may be applied. *All extension requests must be made prior to the assignment deadline.* No retrospective extensions will be granted.

COURSE GRADING

Reading and Reading Interaction Papers	35%
Case Studies	20%
Observation Videos and Interaction Paper	20%
Final Exam	20%
Class Attendance and Participation	5%

Grading Scale:

Standard RTS Grading Scale

Additional Details:

Special Needs

In order to ensure full class participation, any student with a disabling condition requiring special accommodations (e.g., recordings, special adaptive equipment, special note-taking or test-taking needs) is strongly encouraged to contact the professor at the beginning of the course to make appropriate arrangements.

Disclaimer

During the course of the semester the professor reserves the right to modify any portion of this syllabus as deemed necessary to the professor because of events and circumstances that occur during the term.

Classroom Policies

1. All classroom policies at RTS are expected to be followed.
2. Guidelines for papers (including reflections and exams) submitted in this course can be found as a separate document on Canvas. **Reading this document and following its instructions is essential for you to pass this course.**
3. Students are required to cite all sources consulted for a written assignment. Students who plagiarize or cheat in any other manner are guilty of academic misconduct and will be reported to the Academic Dean. This will result in disciplinary action up to and including failure of the course and academic dismissal.
4. Laptops are welcome in class for note taking only. Only word processing programs may be open during class; no browsers, email programs, social media feeds, or any other program is to be used. Please silence cell phones and do not text, Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, or whatever else beckons for your attention during class.

REFORMED  THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
SYSTEM

Course Objectives Related to Student Learning Outcomes

Course: PT5350-D1 - Pastoral Counseling
 Professor: Dr. Keith A. Evans
 Campus: Dallas
 Date: Spring 2026

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Student Learning Outcomes</u></p> <p><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></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Rubric</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Strong ➤ Moderate ➤ Minimal ➤ None 	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Mini-Justification</u></p>
<p><u>ARTICULATION</u> Broadly understands and articulates knowledge, both oral and written, of essential biblical, theological, historical, and cultural/global information, including details, concepts, and frameworks. Also includes ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.</p>	<p>Moderate</p>	<p>This course requires students to articulate biblical and theological understanding both orally and in writing through reading interaction papers, case studies, and class discussion. Students are trained to communicate Scriptural truth clearly and pastorally, particularly in pastoral shepherding contexts.</p>
<p><u>SCRIPTURE</u> 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.</p>	<p>Moderate</p>	<p>Students engage Scripture as the authoritative and sufficient source for counseling and pastoral care, learning to apply biblical truth wisely to contemporary situations. While original-language exegesis is not a central emphasis, students are trained to interpret Scripture responsibly and to employ it wisely in addressing pastoral and shepherding concerns.</p>
<p><u>REFORMED THEOLOGY</u> Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.</p>	<p>Moderate</p>	<p>The course is grounded in a Reformed theological framework, with counseling methodology flowing from confessional commitments reflected in the Westminster Standards. Students are introduced to how Reformed theology directly shapes pastoral shepherding.</p>
<p><u>SANCTIFICATION</u> Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification.</p>	<p>Strong</p>	<p>This course emphasizes personal spiritual growth, self-application of Scripture, and dependence upon Christ in the shepherding task. Students are called to examine their own hearts, fostering growth in sanctification as a necessary foundation for faithful pastoral ministry.</p>

<p><u>WORLDVIEW</u> Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God. Includes ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues.</p>	<p>Moderate</p>	<p>Students are trained to bring Scripture to bear on real-life problems within church and cultural contexts, discerning competing approaches to soul care and evaluating them biblically. The course encourages thoughtful engagement with contemporary issues while remaining focused on pastoral application rather than cultural analysis.</p>
<p><u>WINSOMELY REFORMED</u> Embraces a winsomely Reformed ethos.</p>	<p>Strong</p>	<p>This course cultivates a gracious, humble, and pastorally sensitive expression of Reformed pastoral shepherding. Students are trained to counsel with clarity and conviction, demonstrating a winsome posture toward counselees/congregants.</p>
<p><u>PASTORAL MINISTRY</u> Ability to minister the Word of God to hearts and lives of both church and unchurched, to include preaching, teaching, leading in worship, leading and shepherding the local congregation, aiding in spiritual maturity, concern for non-Christians.</p>	<p>Strong</p>	<p>Pastoral shepherding is counseling. Counseling is pastoral shepherding. This course teaches an essential aspect of pastoral ministry that Christ calls his under-shepherds to faithfully engage in. Through case studies, observation of counseling practice, and applied assignments, students develop the ability to minister Scripture to the hearts and lives of both believers and unbelievers.</p>