

REFORMED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY  
**PT5350 – Pastoral Counseling**  
**Fall, 2026**  
**Instructor: John C. Kwasny, Ph.D.**  
**[jkwasny@pearorchard.org](mailto:jkwasny@pearorchard.org)**  
**601-519-8423**

**Course Description:**

This course is an introduction to the pastor's role and responsibility as Biblical counselor in the local church. A system of counseling grounded in Biblical presuppositions will be taught as well as basic counseling process and practice. The student will also receive foundational knowledge and understanding of typical individual, marital, and family problems with an emphasis on applying Scriptural principles to these life issues. Case studies will be reviewed, and a system of premarital counseling will be presented as well.

**Required Reading:**

Emler, M. R. (2009). *CrossTalk: Where Life and Scripture Meet*.  
Lelek, J. (2018). *Biblical Counseling Basics: Roots, Beliefs, & Future*  
Newheiser, J. (2017). *Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage: Critical Questions and Answers*.  
Pierre, J & Reju D. (2015). *The Pastor and Counseling*  
Tripp, P. D. (2002). *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*.

**Recommended Resources for your Counseling Library:**

A reading list will be handed out during the course.

**Assignments:**

**Reading**

Students will follow the course schedule.

**Book Reports/Reviews**

Write two-page, typed reports/reviews of the following three (3) books: *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*, *The Pastor and Counseling*, and *CrossTalk*.

**Due: September 17, October 15, November 12**

**Philosophy of Counseling Paper**

Write a paper presenting your philosophy of pastoral counseling. Make sure to include:

1. A Scriptural foundation to your counseling
2. Your vision for how much and what types of counseling you will do in your ministry.
3. The place of psychological theories and/or techniques in your counseling.
4. How you believe Reformed theology and various psychologies integrate.
5. The role of the church in counseling.

*Requirements:* 6-8 pages, double-spaced 12 point typeset with standard margins. Cite at least five sources, listed at the end of the paper.

**Due: November 19**

### **Case Studies**

Interact with and write up five (5) case studies throughout the semester. Instructions will be given during the course.

*Due: December 3*

### **Final Exam**

The final exam will be a comprehensive, written exam which will cover content from all of the lectures as well as applicable case studies.

### **Grading:**

- 10% - Class Attendance/Participation
- 15% - Book Reports
- 20% - Case Studies
- 25% - Philosophy of Counseling Paper
- 30% - Final Exam

### **Class Schedule:**

**Class will meet on Thursdays from 9:00 am - Noon.**

#### **Week 1 (08/27)**

Introduction and History of Pastoral Counseling

*Reading:* Tripp Chapters 1-5

#### **Week 2 (09/03)**

Counseling Presuppositions

*Reading:* Tripp Chapters 6-10

#### **Week 3 (09/10)**

Counseling Process

*Reading:* Tripp Chapters 11-14

#### **Week 4 (09/17)**

Counseling Practice

*Reading:* Pierre & Reju (Entire book)

***Book Report #1 (Tripp) Due***

#### **Week 5 (09/24)**

Individual Counseling Problems I: Self Problems, Anxiety

*Reading:* Lelek Chapters 3-6

#### **Week 6 (10/01)**

Individual Counseling Problems II: Depression, Anger

*Reading:* Lelek Chapters 7-10

**NO CLASS, READING WEEK (10/8)**

**Week 7 (10/15)**

Guest Lecturer: Rev. Caleb Cangelosi

*Reading:* Lelek Chapters 11-16

***Book Report #2 (Pierre & Reju) Due***

**Week 8 (10/22)**

Individual Counseling Problems III: Addictions, More complex problems

*Reading:* Emlet Chapters 1-5

**Week 9 (10/29)**

Church Discipline; Crisis Counseling

*Reading:* Emlet Chapters 6-11

**Week 10 (11/05)**

Pre-Marital Counseling

*Reading:* Newheiser Chapters 1-15

**Week 11 (11/12)**

Marital Counseling I

*Reading:* Newheiser Chapters 16-31

***Book Report # 3 (Emlet) Due***

**Week 12 (11/19)**

Marital Counseling II

*Reading:* Newheiser Chapters 32-40

***Philosophy of Counseling Paper Due***

**NO CLASS, THANKSGIVING DAY (11/26)**

**Week 13 (12/03)**

Counseling Teens and Children

***Case Studies Due***

**FINAL EXAM: TBA**

**Course Objectives Related to MDiv Student Learning Outcomes  
With Mini-Justification**

Course: Pastoral Counseling  
 Professor: John Kwasny, Ph.D.  
 Campus: Jackson  
 Date: 5/19/2026

<u><b>MDiv Student Learning Outcomes</b></u>		<u><b>Rubric</b></u> ➤ Strong ➤ Moderate ➤ Minimal ➤ None	<u><b>Mini-Justification</b></u>
<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	The pastoral counselor must be able to articulate a biblical framework of counseling.
<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.)	Moderate	Pastoral counseling is rooted in a knowledge of Biblical principles concerning man’s problems and solutions to those problems.
<b>Reformed Theology</b>	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	Moderate	Reformed theology does impact how a pastor counsels. The WCF addresses some counseling concerns.
<b>Sanctification</b>	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student’s sanctification.	Strong	Pastors must first counsel themselves biblically!
<b>Desire for Worldview</b>	Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God.	Strong	Pastoral counseling is to be done from a consistent Biblical world and life view.
<b>Winsomely Reformed/ Evangelistic</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 firmly connected to evangelism. We need to learn how to counsel Christians and non-Christians alike.
<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.	None	
<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, both in America and worldwide.	Strong	Pastoral counseling is the centerpiece of the pastoral ministry.

<b>Church/World</b>	Ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues.	Moderate	Pastoral counseling has a public side as we address cultural issues.
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