

TRINITY
Episcopal School for Ministry
Doctor of Ministry Program

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND ADVANCE READING ASSIGNMENT

RW 801
Thesis Project Preparation
June 23-27, 2008

Instructors

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Credits: 3 units

I. Course Description

RW 801 guides students through a collegial and mentored process of preparing and writing a Doctor of Ministry project proposal. The course provides the basic skills needed for the project's combination of pastoral reflection, biblical and theological study, academic research and empirical research. (The skills can easily be applied to shorter papers and articles, sermons, and the like.) The final outcome of the course will be the actual student thesis-project proposal.

II. THE SEMINAR PROCESS

The class begins with a review of library information resources and information technology, as well as a basic review of theological research methods. The class then turns to the identification of a ministry (or pastoral) problem. Participants look subsequently at biblical and theological questions that the problem statement raises in the identification of a ministry (or pastoral) problem. Participants then look at biblical and theological questions that the problem statement raises. The class continues with a consideration of the empirical study of the problem, and concludes with the proposal of pastorally sustainable answers that are biblically and theologically sound. The course combines lectures, class discussions, and individual mentoring in the week of Inter Term with readings and exercises sent by mail or e-mail before and after the Inter Term week. It is required for all Doctor of Ministry students immediately prior to their thesis writing.

Students who change their topic or whose project has not made substantial progress in the previous year are expected to take the course again. Other students are welcomed and encouraged to retake the course. The course is divided into two parts: the preparation for the on-campus seminar and the writing of the project proposal. Students will receive credit for the course only after their project proposal is accepted by the Doctor of Ministry Oversight Committee representing the Trinity faculty at large.

III. OBJECTIVES

The course is intended to teach students how to do advanced research in ministry, by helping them:

1. Use basic research methods and tools, including library and Internet resources;
2. Identify and define a ministry (or pastoral) problem to be solved;
3. Discern the biblical and theological questions raised by a ministry problem;
4. Create a focused and concrete research plan, and choose the proper research methods for the project;
5. Find the evidence needed, determine its value, and test its accuracy;
6. Write accurately and systematically, with sensitivity to the precise use of words and the needs of the reader; and
7. Produce a project in accordance with the stylistic and bibliographic conventions required.

IV. TEXTS [REQUIRED]

Myers, William R. Research in Ministry: A Primer for the Doctor of Ministry Program
Chicago: Exploration Press, 2000. Third edition

Gibaldi, Joseph. MLA Style Manual and Guide to Scholarly Publishing .
New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1998. Second edition

Ammerman, Nancy T. et al, Studying Congregations: A New Handbook Nashville: Abingdon, 1998.

(Handouts and readings as assigned (please note that some readings not listed may be assigned in addition). **All supplemental materials will be provided at the appropriate time. You need not request these.**

V. REQUIREMENTS

This course is offered as a pass/fail course. To pass, students must:

1. Complete the readings and exercises and attend the Inter Term class. Please note that access to the Internet will be needed. When you are registered for the course we will notify the online coordinator to put you on “blackboard”. To access the readings, go to RW801 and click on course documents. The first one is the current syllabus and the readings follow. You can download all of these.
2. By the end of the class week, complete a draft project proposal approved by the course faculty and in the format that is given to you during the seminar. The proposal will include: a detailed statement of the ministry problem they will address; a list of the biblical and theological questions that must be answered to solve the problem; a description of the methodology to be used to gather and analyze the data; and a comprehensive working bibliography of the relevant works to be consulted (biblical, theological, and pastoral). **Please note: you will have required work to do each evening, Monday through Thursday of this course, Monday being the mandatory dinner at the Thompson’s. The library will be open regular evening hours.**
3. Complete a D.Min. Final Project proposal to the standards described in the course.

VI. COURSE SCHEDULE

Pre-Seminar

Phase One: Thinking about the work ...

Reading:

- 1) Handouts: George Orwell’s “Politics and the English Language,” C. S. Lewis’ “Learning in War Time”;
Readings: “Why Work So Hard to Write Well?,” “The nature of the D.Min. program,” and “Beginning Research.”
- 2) Myers, pages 3-23.
- 3) Ammerman, pages 7-39.

Writing Exercise:

- 1) Begin research (or “grazing”) as described in the handout titled “Beginning

- Research”;
- 2) Write a short essay on the nature of your work and the disciplines (practical and spiritual) you will follow to complete it.

Phase Two: Understanding the work ...

Reading:

- 1) Handouts “Identifying and detailing a ministry problem” and “Finding the academic resources you need”
- 2) Myers, pages 34-41.
- 3) Ammerman, pages 40-104.

Assignment

- 1) Identify and detail a ministry problem to be pursued, as described in the handout “Identifying...” and submit it to the instructors for comment.
- 2) Begin to compile a bibliography using the methods in the handout “Finding the academic resources” and from it create a reading plan for the time before the Inter Term, and submit it to the instructors for approval.

Phase Three: Beginning the work ...

Reading:

- 1) Handouts “Evaluating Your Data” and “Drawing the biblical and theological questions from ministry problems.”
- 2) Myers, pages 42-86.
- 3) Ammerman, pages 105-239.

Assignment:

- 1) Discern the biblical and theological questions raised by the chosen ministry problem, as described in the handout “Drawing”;
- 2) Continue reading according to approved plan.

In-Seminar

Refining the work ...

Reading:

- 1) Handout “The project proposal.”

Assignment:

- 1) Create a draft project proposal as described in the handout, based upon the previous work and the reading so far.

The intensive week will combine in-class discussions of the draft proposals with research exercises in the library. Through the week’s work, students should clearly articulate a ministry problem, identify the biblical and theological questions it raises,

and determine the research method needed to understand the ministry problem. Students should be prepared to work on drafts each evening of the seminar.

Schedule

Monday

Morning	Introduction and description of project proposal Orientation to Information resources & Library [Library Staff]
Afternoon	The thesis project proposal template [HLT]
Evening	Dinner Event

Tuesday

Morning:	Articulating a ministry problem
Afternoon:	First drafts of Ministry Problems
Pm/Homework	Refine individual ministry problem statement and Draft Proposal

Wednesday

Morning:	Review of FIRST draft proposals
Afternoon:	Review continued; Statement of Objectives & Conceptual Framework
PM/ Homework	Write second draft of project proposal, revising problem statement & add statement of objectives and conceptual framework to proposal if not already present

Thursday

Morning	Review revised proposals
Afternoon	Biblical and Systematic Theological Dimensions of Project
Homework:	Revise Proposals

Friday

Morning:	Review MLA style Issues and Final Format of proposal
Afternoon:	Final review of proposals

Post-Seminar

(Projects are formally due three months following the course [August 27, 2008]. The instructors hope that you will be ready to submit a draft at the end of the week. You have the subsequent three months if you need them to fulfill the course expectation.)

Write the project proposal using the outline provided. Make all final revisions and submit to course instructor. **Final Proposal should be e-mailed** with the following file Name: **RW801-Your surname-your first initial-Th Proj Prop -The Year and month of course**. Thus, if I were submitting for my class in June 2008, I would name the file: **RW801 Thompson, L-Th Proj Prop-2008-Jun**

Template for your project proposal

**A Proposal for a
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY THESIS-PROJECT**

Submitted to the
**DEAN OF THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY PROGRAM
TRINITY EPISCOPAL SCHOOL FOR MINISTRY**

FOR SUPPORT THROUGH THE AUTHORIZATION OF THE THESIS-PROJECT
OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

Title: *Tiddely Winks in Postmodern age*

D. Min. student: *The Rev. Fred Smedlap
311 Eleventh Street
Ambridge, Pennsylvania 15003-2397
(724) 266-3838 ext 202 [work]
(724) 457-2244 [home]*

Thesis-Project Committee: *To be filled out by Director.*

Date Submitted: *November 14, 2001*

Date Approved:

Approval Signatures:
(Chairperson)

I. INTRODUCTION & STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

One sentence statement of the problem:

Then fill in the questions below which will help you explain how you are looking at the problem by....

Narrowing:

Who? .

What?

Where?

When? (How long?)

How? (How has this lack harmed people?)

Why? (Why does it matter enough to study, and to ask other people to help me?)

Restatement:

State your problem once again to clarify for the reader what it is you are trying to look at.

II. STATEMENT OF OBJECTIVES

This section explains what you hope to have at the end of your project. It needs to be very concrete, and it should spell out exactly what you will have when you finish. In the section following you will have a research design that will be connected to these objectives, so that you can plan by saying "I will fulfill objective A by doing the following...". Every objective will have a least one research design associated with it, and vice versa.

So what objective should you have? Anything that will help you address your problem statement. So ask yourself: Will you be developing and testing a new curriculum? Will you be conducting interviews of parishioners? Will you be using a series of small groups to explore a new concept, and if so when? Will you be testing a hypothesis about ministry, and if so how? Will you be doing some focus groups? **Be concrete** in this section. What do you hope to have when you finish? It could be as simple as a list like this:

I will:

- a. *Design a stewardship program for a postmodern parish*
- b. *Implement the program in a fall stewardship campaign*
- c. *Read and reflect on the implications of biblical theology for stewardship*
- d. *Read and reflect on the implications of systematic theology for stewardship.*
- e. *Do a before and after interview with a cross section of parishioners*
- f. *Offer some suggestions for a parish teaching stewardship to post moderns.*

III. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In this short section of your proposal you will indicate to the thesis-project committee what knowledge is most relevant to the under girding of your study. You will describe what ideas, concepts, or theories you intend to develop in the thesis-project that will provide the conceptual framework or frame of reference for the problem of ministry being studied.

In this section you be most likely addressing three components.

First, you will want to address how your work will be *Multidisciplinary*. You need to indicate which disciplines you will be drawing upon to form your conceptual framework. Will it be based primarily upon Biblical, theological, philosophical, historical and/or behavioral concepts? Explain to the oversight committee how these will fit together.

Second, you need to explain *Specificity and emphasis*. Will it depend heavily on Jung's personality theory? Or Graeme's Goldsworthy approach to biblical theology? Clearly there are aspects which we expect to see in every Thesis project as the Project proposal Outline clearly points to. For example, we expect every project to use biblical theology as they approach their problem in chapter two, and to give their problem systematic theological reflection in chapter three. But different projects will have different emphases. This is your place to explain that emphasis in your general approach.

Be specific as to what you intend to do with Scripture (exegesis, word study or the development of a biblical theological motif). Indicate what you intend to do with the other disciplines. What idea will you develop and how? Which writers/thinkers will inform your thinking as you seek to develop this important section of the thesis-project? Will you review research literature that relates to your specific project?

Lastly, we ask you to speak to how this project will be *integrative*. The integration aspect has two parts: a) relating the ideas of the various disciplines to one another; and b) relating these ideas/concepts to the purpose of your study. Here you are being asked to demonstrate the relationship of theory and practice. In the proposal the integration statement should be brief indicating what you intend to do more fully in the thesis-project itself. You are **not** being asked to provide an integrative statement now.

IV. PROCEDURES

Research Method

Is it a 1) Quantitative Research Project? Or, 2) An Ethnographic Study? Or, 3) Pro-active Research Project? (See chapter 4, pages 25-29 of Research in Ministry) (See also chapter 7 of Studying Congregations by Nancy Ammerman)

The point of this section is not so much the technical language of the name of the research method. The concern here is to explain what your *broad* approach will be in how you are going about researching your problem, or asking what you are asking. What information will you be gathering? This section should be very brief, as you will flesh out the details in the research design section.

Research Design

This section spells out in more *detail* what you have described above. When will you interview, who will you interview, etc. This section needs to specifically spell your actual details of research. A simple way to approach this section is to take the statement of objectives above and list them with space after every one. In each one of these objectives ask yourself, what it will take for me to address my problem in this area.

Let's say your problem is that you want to help pastors value and implement the spiritual discipline of fasting. Your objectives and signs might be as follows:

1. Objective: To study how many local pastors practice fasting as a spiritual discipline
 - a. Research design - interview local pastors
 - b. Research design - ask them to participate in a four week program of local clergy

2. Objective: To provide a program resource to encourage pastors in their use of fasting
 - a. Research design -Survey three programs on fasting through the library survey
 - b. Research design: Design and write a curriculum for a four week study

3. Objective: Evaluate whether the four-week study is helpful to clergy.
 - a. Research design: ask participants to answer the questions: "Was this survey helpful? How did the study affect your ministry? How did it affect your personal life?"
 - b. Research design: interview 10 parishioners in each parish. Ask them, "Did the pastor's preaching improve during these four weeks?"

This simplistic example demonstrates the need to associate your objectives with real means of attaining them. The Oversight Committee will want to see the integration

between your problem statement, your objectives in this project, and your means of researching the problem. Keep in mind that you can always change your questions or approach, but the Oversight Committee cannot give you real feedback if you do not offer real specifics in your design.

Evaluation: Criteria & Methods

This section explains how you will evaluate the research. For example, one of our students asked his vestry to fill out a questionnaire every Sunday, with questions to help them to reflect on how they had heard God that week. His initial plan assumed that everyone would be in church every week and would fill out the questionnaire. He realized afterwards that for various reasons many missed quite a few Sundays so they could not answer honestly for every week. And some did not want to fill out the questionnaire. So how did this affect his overall results? He had to evaluate this.

This section needs to reflect on the potential strengths and potential limitations of your approach, and most importantly reflect on what you will do to evaluate whether or not it has been successful and to what degree. So for example, using the example above, if everyone in the congregation was hearing from God in a new and powerful way, but they were adamant in refusing to do a questionnaire because they were too excited about what they were hearing from God...how would you assess that?

Time Schedule (a sample)

Date	Activity
March 1, 2xxx	<i>Project proposal; Chapter One (statement of problem)</i> Reader to return by May 15
July 1, 2xxx	<i>Submission of Chapter Two (Biblical) & Rewrites of Chapter 1</i> Reader to return by July 31
September 1, 2xxx	<i>Submission of Chapter Three (Theological)</i> Reader to return by September 30
November 1, 2xxx	<i>Submission of Chapter Four (Methodological/Research)</i> Reader to return by December 1
Jan 1, 2xxx	<i>Submission of Chapter Five and Six (Conclusion, Bibliography, Appendices)</i> Reader to return by February 1
March 1, 2xxx	Rewrites of Thesis Project Due Oral Defense – The D. Min Director will work with you and the readers to establish an appropriate date for your defense.

May ?, 2xxx

Graduation [*NB – please do not purchase plane tickets for graduation until you have passed the defense and been given an invitation.*]

Scope of the Thesis-Project

In this section of your proposal you will indicate to the thesis-project committee your consideration of the size as well as the merit of the thesis-project. It is asked for at this point in your proposal so as to help you review whether or not your proposed thesis-project is so grandiose and unreasonable in terms of time and resources that it needs to be limited and focused more sharply, or so small and limited as to be of questionable value. This piece will help your advisor guide you on what is worth the effort and what is not.

Include in this some reference to *Size*. In writing the Scope section of your proposal you should clearly demonstrate that your project is manageable within the time parameters of the D. Min program. You do not want a study that is so expansive as to be uncontrollable [“A 20 year study of the effects of charismatic prayer meetings in your parish” might fit this category, for example). Nor do you want a study that is so small and restrictive as to be of little significance (“The response given to a bible study on November 1, 2001 during a full moon” might be an example of this category). Your statement needs to reflect that you have considered your own time, energy, and resources as well as the demands being placed upon the faculty members working with you.

You should also include a statement of the project’s *Value*. Show that the thesis-project that you are proposing will involve you in professional/scholarly inquiry commensurate with doctoral level study and that will represent growth for you. The issue here is quality rather than quantity. You want this to be valuable for you.

The Candidate’s Interest and Ability

This section should describe briefly, but in specifics, your interest in the topic that you are pursuing. Why did you start to address this problem in ministry? Why did it draw your interest? Then describe your educational background (B.A. Denison University with double major in History and religion, 1975, M.Div General Theological Seminary in 1979) as well as your ordination with date and denomination. Then you should also describe your experiences and training, whether they be formal or informal continuing education. Your reader will want to know what has shaped and informed your thinking. Don’t be bashful here. On the other hand, do not exaggerate!

V. CONTRIBUTION TO MINISTRY

Development of Candidate’s Competence

This section articulates how this project will make you a more effective minister. It is a *very important section*, and it is one in which your examiners at the oral defense are likely to query you on when you present your work to them.

Contribution to Church and Colleagues

How will this project help others in ministry? Do not worry about whether or not it will have an impact on a small or large group of people. Most candidates fear that few will be interested in their projects, but they have been surprised at how other clergy at Trinity have pulled out their thesis projects and been influenced by them. Answer the question in this section: Who is my target audience?

VI. WORKS CONSULTED (WORKING BIBLIOGRAPHY)

This should include your current progress. Remember that one way to be building your bibliography is to list the books that you read for your core courses. So if you consider your future chapters of your project, you can start building the list like this:

Chapter 1 Statement of Your Ministry Problem

List the books that you read about ministry in DM 800

Chapter 2 Biblical Theology

List the books that you read about biblical theology in BI 800

Chapter 3 Systematic Theology

List the books that you read about systematic in ST 800

Chapter 4 Research

List the books that you read for research and missiology in ME 800

Chapter 5 Conclusion

On this one you may wish to use texts that were resources for RW 801, this course.

When you compile the titles of relevant books under these categories you will discover you have progressed much further in your research than you may have realized. Janani Luwum scholars are in a slightly different situation in that they will have not taken these courses yet, but the schema will be helpful to them in future planning.