

**CHTH G115 MS 6ZC6 SYLLABUS**  
**Current Perspectives in Practical Theology Fall 2009**

**McMaster Divinity College**  
**Phil C. Zylla, D.Th.**  
**Office #:** 215 905-525-9140 x20104

Fall Term 2009  
Monday 3:30 – 5:20 p.m.  
6 units

**Biography:**

Dr. Phil Zylla is Academic Dean and Associate Professor of Pastoral Theology at McMaster Divinity College. Prior to this Dr. Zylla served for six years as Principal of the Associated Canadian Theological Schools of Trinity Western University. Dr. Zylla was active in pastoral ministry in the Canadian context for over 18 years as a Senior Pastor. He is married to Melodie and has two daughters, Amanda (21) and Chelsey (17).

**Course Description:**

The past twenty years has witnessed a significant increase in academic research in the field known most widely as *Practical Theology*. Such literature is a significant indicator of the emerging intellectual and spiritual search for foundational understandings that will support the advancement of the mission of the church in the world. Of course, this is not a new interest – the church has always deliberately reflected on its mission and practices. However, the widely felt need for expanding the nucleus of academic literature to support the theoretical interests of practical theology represent a new phase of this inquiry. This course is a call for constructive imagination and humility in approaching the great questions that emerge from Edward Farley calls, “the ecclesial existence and the constitutive activities” of the church in the world. The structure of the course seeks to draw widely from various thinkers who have helped to shape current perspectives of *Practical Theology* through their scholarly contributions. Participants in this course will be invited to embrace the intriguing challenge of developing well-informed and carefully researched contributions of their own, regardless of the complexity of such a task.

*“...my contention is that at the heart of every good theology lies not simply a plausible intellectual vision but more importantly a compelling account of a way of life, and that theology is therefore best done from within the pursuit of this way of life.”* - Miroslav Volf, “Theology for a Way of Life” in *Practicing Theology*, Miroslav Volf and Dorothy C. Bass, eds., 247.

*“It is time then . . . to uncover and assess the deep presuppositions and dominant paradigms which determine how the unity and aims of theological education are understood . . . to obtain some clarity about the sense in which theological understanding (sapiential knowledge and its dialectical exercise) attends the subject matter of all education which purports to be theological . . . to discern the areas of study and teaching (disciplines) necessary to an education which is a **paideia** of theological understanding for leaders of the church.”*

– Edward Farley, *Theologia*, 201-202.

*We must have that confidence in God that is hoping in him.*

*We must have that trust in God that is hoping in him.*

*We must have hope in God.*

*We must hope in God, we must have faith in God, that is all the same thing.*

*We must have that faith in God that is hoping in him.*

*We must believe in him, which is hoping.”*

- Charles Peguy *Le Porche du mystère de la deuxième vertu*, 1911, translated by Dorothy Brown Aspinwall, 1970, 83

**Course Objectives:**

**Knowing**

1. To widen participant’s theoretical understanding of the field of practical theology
2. To explore the current literature supporting academic research in the field of practical theology
3. To deepen resources which will provide the foundations for academic research in practical theology.

**Being**

1. To become cognizant of the personal trajectory of one’s own aspirations to contribute to the ongoing mission of the church in the world.

2. To inspire a personal sense of mission and calling to the work of academic practical theology.
3. To discern the ways in which one is being led to support the intellectual and theoretical research needs of the contemporary church.

### **Doing**

1. To evaluate some of the foundational literature in the field of practical theology in order to develop working assumptions regarding research in this field of study.
2. To distinguish the elements of contemporary practical theology in such a way as to locate oneself in the field and to anticipate possible paths for on-going research in this area of study.
3. To demonstrate competence in tested methods required for one's own chosen focus area within the wider field of practical theology.
4. To join a professional society related to one's chosen area of focus in practical theology and to report on plans for participation in the next five years.

### **Required Course Textbooks:**

Ammerman, Nancy T., Jackson W. Carroll, Carl S. Dudley, and William McKinney, eds.  
*Studying Congregations: A New Handbook*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998.

Farley, Edward  
*Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education*. 2<sup>nd</sup> printing Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989.

Hiltner, Seward  
*Preface to Pastoral Theology: The Ministry and Theory of Shepherding*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1958.

Woodward, James and Pattison, Stephen, eds.  
*The Blackwell Reader in Pastoral and Practical Theology*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2000.

Mudge, Lewis S. and Poling, James N., eds.  
*Formation and Reflection: The Promise of Practical Theology*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987.

Osmer, Richard R.  
*Practical Theology: An Introduction*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2008.

Palmer, Parker  
*Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000.

Patton, John  
*From Ministry to Theology: Pastoral Action and Reflection*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Printing Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992.

Swinton, John and Mowat, Harriet  
*Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*. 2<sup>nd</sup> printing London: SCM Press, 2007.

(n.b. If you want to read ahead I strongly urge you to order through the READ ON bookstore. We have been assured us of the best available prices. Email directly to [books@readon.ca](mailto:books@readon.ca))

## **COURSE OUTLINE                      Mondays 3:30 p.m. – 5:20 p.m.**

**September 14<sup>th</sup>**

### **Confessions of a Pastoral Theologian**

James D. Whitehead, "The Practical Play of Theology" in *Formation and Reflection: The Promise of Practical Theology*, Lewis S. Mudge and James N. Poling, eds., 36-54.

Thomas H. Groome, "Theology on our Feet: A Revisionist Pedagogy for Healing the Gap Between Academia and Ecclesia" in *Formation and Reflection: The Promise of Practical Theology*, Lewis S. Mudge and James N. Poling, eds., 55-78.

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*“Every newly realized implication or depth of the gospel emerges out of the same kind of ambiguity that preceded the initial reception. The great mystics and the great prophets testify equally to this truth. The mystic has his [sic] ‘dark night of the soul’ and the prophet his [sic] days in the wilderness. And in a lower pitch the same thing is true of every Christian.” - Seward Hiltner, Preface to Pastoral Theology, 1958, 180.*

**September 21<sup>st</sup>**

**The Nature of Practical Theology**

Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, v - 27

Kathleen A. Cahalan and James R. Nieman, “Mapping the Field of Practical Theology” in *For Life Abundant*, Dorothy C. Bass and Craig Dykstra, eds.

*“Theology should not be subdivided into independent fields of study to the extent that it becomes no more than the aggregate of all these subdisciplines. A field of study is not a section of theology; it is a particular perspective on theology [which is] an indivisible whole.”* LM Heyns and HJC Pieterse, *A Primer in Practical Theology*, 5.

From: *The Blackwell Reader in Pastoral and Practical Theology*, James Woodward and Stephen Pattison, eds.,

1. Edward Farley, “Interpreting Situations: An Inquiry into the Nature of Practical Theology”, 118-127
2. Stephen Pattison and James Woodward, “An Introduction to Pastoral and Practical Theology”, 1-19
3. Alastair Campbell, “The Nature of Practical Theology”, 77-88.
4. Paul Ballard, “The Emergence of Pastoral and Practical Theology in Britain”, 59-72.
5. Elaine Graham, “Practical Theology as Transforming Practice”, 89-103.

**September 28<sup>th</sup>**

**Method and Methodology in Practical Theology**

Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 28-260.

Optional: L M Heyns and HJC Pieterse, *A Primer in Practical Theology*, 1-95.

*“We use the term ‘method’ to mean more than ‘practice,’ however skilled, and more than ‘technical means.’ Every discipline, including theology, uses technical means. But*

*technical*

*means govern inquiry only after assumptions have been made, history and context have been reviewed, and a specific subject of inquiry set. After technical means have been employed, much yet remains to be done. Data must be organized, their significance and relationships must be assessed, and implications need to be drawn from them. Method in any discipline is that which engaged critically in all these procedures and not solely in those which use the technical means particular to the discipline.” - Seward Hitner, “Meaning and Importance of Pastoral Theology” in *The Blackwell Reader in Pastoral and Practical Theology*, 46.*

**October 5<sup>th</sup>**

**The Roots of Theological Reflection**

From: *The Blackwell Reader in Pastoral and Practical Theology*, James Woodward and Stephen Pattison, eds.,

1. Stephen Pattison, “Some Straw for the Bricks: A Basic Introduction to Theological Reflection”, 133-145.
2. Emmanuel Lartey, “Practical Theology as Theological Form”, 128-134.

John Francis Collins, “Faith in Action Seeking Understanding for Action: Lonergan and Practical Theology” [http://dlibrary.acu.edu.au/research/theology/ejournal/aejt\\_8/collins.htm](http://dlibrary.acu.edu.au/research/theology/ejournal/aejt_8/collins.htm)

Optional:

Donald Capps, *Pastoral Care and Hermeneutics*, 1-128.

given

“I have great appreciation for the action-reflection model. But in recent years it has become evident that this model needs refurbishing. It is not explicit enough about what constitutes a pastoral action. Even more important, it is not very clear as to what is involved in ‘reflecting’ on one’s pastoral actions. Users of this method explain that ‘reflection’ may involve a number of objective resources as well as subjective insights, including theological and ethical concepts, psychological and sociological theories, and the like. But there has not been much systematic discussion of what each of these resources is expected to contribute to the reflection process. Also, not much attention has been given to what constitutes a reasonably complete reflection on a given action. How do we know when we have reflected enough? How do we know when we have gained true insights into a pastoral action?”- Donald E. Capps, *Pastoral Care and Hermeneutics*, 12.

**October 12<sup>th</sup>**                      **Thanksgiving - no class**

**October 19<sup>th</sup>**                      **Four Tasks of Practical Theology**  
Richard Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction*, 1-218

“Practical theological interpretation involves four key tasks: the descriptive-empirical, the interpretive, the normative, and the pragmatic. It is helpful to conceptualize these four tasks with the image of a hermeneutical circle, which portrays interpretation as composed of distinct but interrelated moments . . . the four tasks of practical theological interpretation interpenetrate.” - Richard R. Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction*, 11.

**October 26<sup>th</sup>**                      **Introduction to Pastoral Theology**  
Seward Hiltner, “The Meaning and Importance of Pastoral Theology” in *The Blackwell Reader in Pastoral and Practical Theology*, 27-48.

Seward Hiltner, *Preface to Pastoral Theology*, 1-233.

John Patton, “Introduction to Modern Pastoral Theology in the United States” in *The Blackwell Reader in Pastoral and Practical Theology*, 49-58.

Optional:

Lucy Bregman, “Anton Boisen Revisited” *Journal of Religion and Health*, Vol. 18, No. 3, 1979

Charles Gerkin, *An Introduction to Pastoral Care*, 1-256.

Wayne E. Oates, *The Psychology of Religion*, 1-288

Thomas C. Oden, *Pastoral Theology: Essentials of Ministry*, 1-316

**November 2<sup>nd</sup>**                      **From Ministry to Theology**  
Charles E. Winquist, “Revisioning Ministry: Postmodern Reflections” in *Formation and Reflection: The Promise of Practical Theology*, Lewis S. Mudge and James Poling, eds., 27-35.

John Patton, *From Ministry to Theology*, 1-128.

Don S. Browning, “Practical Theology and Religious Education” in *Formation and Reflection: The Promise of Practical Theology*, Lewis S. Mudge and James N. Poling, eds., 79-102.

**November 9<sup>th</sup>**                      **Congregational Studies**  
Ammerman, Nancy T., Jackson W. Carroll, Carl S. Dudley, and William McKinney, eds.  
*Studying Congregations: A New Handbook*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998.  
[http://hrr.hartsem.edu/cong/congregational\\_studies\\_biblio.html](http://hrr.hartsem.edu/cong/congregational_studies_biblio.html)

“What is the Relevance of Congregational Studies for Pastoral Theology?” in *The Blackwell Reader in Pastoral and Practical Theology*, James Woodward and Stephen

Pattison, eds., 257-271.

**November 16<sup>th</sup>**                    **The Vocation of the Practical Theologian**  
Parker Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak*, 1-115.

**November 23<sup>rd</sup>**                    **Theologia Revisited**  
Edward Farley, *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education*,  
127-203.

**November 30<sup>th</sup>**                    **Taking the ‘Um’ out of Assumptions**  
  
Lewis S. Mudge, “Thinking in the Community of Faith: Toward an Ecclesial Hermeneutic”  
in *Formation and Reflection: The Promise of Practical Theology*, Lewis S. Mudge and  
James N. Poling, eds., 103-119.

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

### **1. Weekly Course Readings**

**30 marks**

The course is designed as a reading course for advanced students in Ministry Studies at McMaster Divinity College. I ask that you carefully prepare the assigned readings for each class session and come prepared to discuss the issues that emerge from these readings. The course depends on the quality and depth of the reading of its participants. I strongly urge you to purchase your own reading copies of the course textbooks - mark them up, deliberate, plan your comments, and enter the class time eager to engage your colleagues on the themes of each session. The marking of these course readings does not require a submitted paper but will be evaluated on four criteria: the level of participation, critical engagement, conceptual integration and facility with the texts under review.

### **2. Discussion Facilitation**

**30 marks**

Beginning with our third session, one person will be responsible for leading us into our discussion of the theme for the day. The facilitation of the discussion should be supported by a 10 page paper on the core issues identified on the theme of the day. Do not limit yourself to the course readings on the day you are facilitating. The facilitation of the class should include the following:

- a. summary of the main points of the reading
- b. key questions and provocative discussion points
- c. further sources as discovered in your own research on the topic – This should include a minimum of 10 volumes or professional journal articles on the theme of the day.

**Due: by assigned date** [n.b. a sign up sheet will be available at the beginning of the course]

### **3. Locating Yourself in the Field of Practical Theology**

**20 marks**

One of the key goals of this course is to sift through the general field in order to locate yourself as a practical or pastoral theologian. It is essential that you come to terms with your own vocational history, your sense of personal mission and identity, and discover the approach that will sustain you as you enter into the field as a professional practical/pastoral theologian. This should be written in a **10-15 page essay** which includes the following elements:

- a. Autobiography – Describe your vocational, intellectual, ecclesial and spiritual history
- b. Give an account of your intellectual and spiritual mentors.
- c. Describe your current understanding of practical theology.
- d. Summarize your educational path [including your current program].
- e. Describe your current relationships and plans in respect to ecclesiastical bodies and professional societies
- f. What are your five year goals in the field of pastoral or practical theology (looking ahead)?
- g. Outline concrete plans that you are making to establish your voice as a pastoral or practical theologian.
- h. Include significant interaction with the readings of the course, especially the methodological choices that you are forming as a practical or pastoral theologian.

**Due: October 19, 2009**

### **4. Write a course syllabus in your focused area of Practical Theology.**

**20 marks**

One aim of this course is to penetrate the literature of the broader field of practical theology in order to discern your own location within it. Therefore, the final assignment of the course is to write a syllabus for a course *Current Perspectives in Practical Theology Fall 2009 McMaster Divinity College Phil C. Zylla, D.Th.*

you envision in your own discipline or field of research (ie. pastoral care, spiritual formation, educational mission of the church, cross-cultural ministry, worship, preaching, etc.). The course should be one that you have a passionate desire to see included in the wider curriculum of practical theology in a seminary, a graduate school program or a church-related college. The elements of the syllabus should be fully developed including the following: course description, course title, seminal works/textbooks, bibliography, course lecture themes with supporting literature, assignments designed to meet specific and stated course objectives. The syllabi will be peer-reviewed in course and graded by the professor.

**Due: November 16, 2009**

**Late Papers:** Late assignments will be docked 1% each late day . (Extensions will only be granted in exceptional circumstances such as extended illness, etc.)

**Spacing:** All assignments are to be double-spaced.

**Hard Copy Submission:** All assignments are due in hard copy by the end of office hours on that day (5 p.m.)  
Permission to submit electronic papers may be granted for commuting students but must be secured from the course professor beforehand.

**Contacting the Professor:** Dr. Phil C. Zylla

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**Consultation with Professor:** by appointment [contact me directly by email [zyllap@mcmaster.ca](mailto:zyllap@mcmaster.ca) or my Executive Assistant, Nina Thomas [thomn@mcmaster.ca](mailto:thomn@mcmaster.ca)]

**College Style for Submission of Written Work:**

All written work—unless informed otherwise by the professor—is to be submitted in accordance with the *McMaster Divinity College Style Guide for Essays and Theses*, available on the McMaster Divinity College web-site.

**Statement on Academic Honesty:**

Academic dishonesty is a serious offence that may take any number of forms, including plagiarism, the submission of work that is not one's own or for which previous credit has been obtained, and/or unauthorized collaboration with other students. Academic dishonesty can result in severe consequences, e.g. failure of the assignment, failure of the course, a notation on one's academic transcript, and/or suspension or expulsion from the College.

Students are responsible for understanding what constitutes academic dishonesty. Please refer to the Divinity College Statement on Academic Honesty at [www.macdiv.ca/regs/honesty.php](http://www.macdiv.ca/regs/honesty.php).

**Gender Inclusive Language:**

McMaster Divinity College uses inclusive language for human beings in worship services, student written materials, and all of its publications. In reference to biblical texts, the integrity of the original expressions and the names of God should be respected. The NRSV and TNIV are examples of the use of inclusive language for human beings. It is expected that inclusive language will be used in chapel services and all MDC assignments.

**READ ON Bookstore:** Textbooks are available from READ ON Bookstore, Room 218 at MacDiv. Books may also be ordered from other sources such as READ ON Bookstore, 100 – 304 The East Mall, Etobicoke, ON M9B 6E2; Phone: 416-622-2934; Fax: 416-622-2308; Email: [books@readon.ca](mailto:books@readon.ca)

**Disclaimer:** This syllabus is the property of the instructor and is prepared with currently available information. The instructor reserves the right to make changes and revisions up until the first day of class.

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