EMP 5005HS Practical Theology Research Methods
Toronto School of Theology

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office hours as needed by appointment—please email
Wednesdays, 11:00-1:00, beginning January 13, 2016

This course addresses issues in the area of Practical Theology with attention to their practical implications for research, including the history of practical theology in pre-modern canon law and moral theology, the writings of Friedrich Schleiermacher, the correlation of theology with the disciplines of the human sciences, and contemporary global developments in practical theology; the varieties scholarly guilds related to practical theology, and their discussions of method; liberation, post-modern and post-colonial issues is practical theological research; and designing practical theological research, including research proposals and ethical issues.

Course Description and Session Outline

In this course students will simultaneously develop their own research project, “scratching what makes them itch,” as some say, while encountering the diverse movements, methods, and logics at work in practical theology internationally. While the focus is on methodological thinking—specifically, how practical theologians articulate and make a case for the way they go about their investigations—students will also learn about the history of practical theology, including the foundation of case-based thinking in the middle ages and the early modern period, the ebb and flow of practical theology in the late modern and the early postmodern period, and world wide developments through local, regional and international scholarly associations.

Session outline:

To goal of this session is to introduce and organize the course and introduce Browning's method in Fundamental Practical Theology. Students will work in small groups to identify their personal research topic for the remainder of the course. (Contributes to class participation grade, #1, below).

2. January 20: Method: How am I going about this investigation?

The goal of this session is to survey the range ways that practical theologians use to describe their research topic.

To prepare for this class, students will read all of the chapters in Bonnie Miller-McLemore, The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology, Part II: Method. Choose two or three methods (for example, congregational studies and poetics) by which you might describe the research topic and question you chose in our first session. In preparation for class discussion, prepare a short, two page presentation on how you would use two or three methods to investigate your research topic, what you would need to do...
to use that method as a theologian rather than a social scientist, and what you gain and lose by choosing one or the other of the methods. Bring copies of your presentation notes for your classmates, and post your presentation notes to blackboard. (Contributes to class participation grade, #1, below).


Practice fulfills a large role in practical theology. The goal of this session is to identify the various meanings of the word “practice” and concepts related to it such as “praxis” and identify how a practice is investigated.

To prepare for this class, read all of the essays in Miller-McLemore Part I, choose one essay, and write one page of notes on the method the author used to investigate this practice. Bring copies of your one page of notes for your colleagues, and post your presentation notes to blackboard. (Contributes to class participation grade, #1, below.)

4. February 3: Inductive Logic is Not New To Theology

Inductive, grounded logic is not new to the twentieth century. The goal of this session is to understand the historical role of practical theology—and to note its historic relationship to cases in law and pastoral care.

Students will read Toulmin and Jonsen, The Abuse of Casuistry. Students should read the entire text except the concluding case examples. The only class prep is personal notes, not presentation notes. I will lecture on this book to help students absorb it. Students should aim to understand the method and criteria presented by Toulmin and Jonsen as casuistry at its best.

5. February 10: The Role of Bible, Historical theology, Systematic Theology in Practical Theology

The goal of this session is to survey a series of methods that scholars have used for treating practical issues theologically.

I will present a lecture on the modern development of practical theology, with reference to the pastoral writings of the Protestant era.

Readings from the pastoral writings of Luther, Calvin, and Wesley,

February 17: Reading week, no class

Read Browning, Fundamental Practical Theology: Descriptive and Strategic Proposals.


The goal of this session is to answer the question: not only how am I going about this investigation, but why am I doing it this way?

Read Browning, Fundamental Practical Theology: Descriptive and Strategic Proposals. What are the underlying GROUNDS for hermeneutical practical theology? Students will be responsible for reading the entire book, and students will make formal presentations to each other on one section of the book. Students must post their initial paper to blackboard and may revise the paper based on class discussion. The paper for class presentation should be posted to blackboard before class; any revised paper should
be posted to blackboard within 48 hours after class. This is a long assignment with two weeks to complete, due to reading week. (Graded Assignment #2, below).

7. March 2: **Putting it All Together**

Using Browning’s method, how would students develop an outline for a research project?

Students will prepare research proposal for the research topic chosen originally. For each proposed “chapter” the student should include two paragraphs, one paragraph on proposed content of the proposal and one paragraph justifying the content. Students should include answers to the following questions: Who is the audience for this work? What is the paradigmatic vignette? What is the research question? What is the hunch about the answer (the thesis)? How would the student go about doing descriptive theology and why? Which interpretive components do the research project and the audience demand—Biblical, historical theological, systematic theological, ethical? In each case, how does that component lead from the descriptive theology? What strategic proposals does the student suggest and to whom are they directed?

Students will present this proposal to each other in class on March 2 and post that paper to blackboard. (Graded assignment, ½ of #5, below).

8. March 9 **The Role of Academic Societies and Guilds**

One of the places that theological method and methodology is debated and developed is when scholarly organizations gather. The goal of this session is to introduce students to the major academic organizations in practical theology.


9. March 16 **Beyond Correlation: Additional Methodologies**

Having learned one method well, the goal of this session is to expand the options for methodologies available to the student.

Students will do initial research into of another methodology in practical theology (for example, empirical, poetic-creative, action, liberative, aesthetic, postmodern, postcolonial) and present their findings in class, comparing the underlying logic of that method to the fundamental practical theology model they have learned. How does this methodology compare and contrast to Browning’s method? Students should bring copies of their written analysis for their colleagues and post presentation notes to blackboard. (Class participation grade, #1, below).

10. March 23 **Additional Methodologies, continued**
The goal of this session is for students to engage a second methodology more deeply, but also to expand the breadth of knowledge by sharing with other students.

Students will write a book review of a major text in the method they selected for the 9\textsuperscript{th} class. The review will be presented in class, and the book review should follow standard conventions of book reviews: 750 words maximum, including summary, strengths, critique, and concluding constructive comments. For further instructions, please note the Toronto Journal of Theology book review instructions under “author’s guidelines,” scroll down beneath manuscript submissions. The review should be posted to blackboard before class and printed copies brought for everyone in the class. (Graded assignment #3, below).

11. March 30 \textit{Comparative Methods: How and why do I choose?}

The goal of this session is to demonstrate what difference it makes when different methods are employed in a practical theological investigation.

Students will develop a second proposal for the same research topic that was presented on March 2 using a different practical theological methodology. The student will answer the same set of questions for the research topic using the different methodology, and then add an analysis of their work from the standpoint of the two methodologies, summarizing the underlying logic of each methodology, what different decisions are required by the researcher, and how the second method takes them in a different research direction than the first. They should be prepared to present their results of their work in class. Work should be posted to blackboard for grading (Graded assignment ½ #5, below.)

In class we will also look at examples of book proposals at major publishers in practical theology and what work students would still need to engage to write a full book proposal. We will spend some time talking about the relationship between the dissertation proposal and the book proposal.

12 April 6 \textit{Practical Theology and the Theological School Curriculum}

To goal of this session is to connect method in research to method in theological school curriculum. Practical theology as a discipline experienced a revival in the 1980s because of its connection to discussion of theological school curriculum. Students will read and be ready to report on one general historical chapter and one chapter from Wiley-Blackwell Companion Part III. (Graded assignment #1: Reading reports to be distributed to class members and posted on blackboard.)

At the end of the course students will be asked to evaluate their own class participation

\textbf{Evaluation}

\textbf{Requirements}

1. Each student will be prepared to enter the discussion of texts read in common. 20%

2. Each student will present a portion of the \textit{A Fundamental Practical Theology} and analyze that section for methodological issues. 20%

3. Each student will prepare a book review on a text that specifically deals with issues of method in practical theology. 20%

4. Each student will prepare an analysis of the practical theological method used in a volume of specialized practical theology. 20%
5. Each student will prepare an outline of an approach to researching a specialized topic using the practical theological method of the student’s choosing, 20%

Course Outcomes

This course is designed to contribute to Outcome 2, Research and Scholarship, GCTS Conjoint Degree Handbook, p. 65:

By developing a practical theology research project throughout the course, students “identify new or unresolved questions or problems within their area of study” and by completing the outline of that project, students “formulate a thesis of claim and construct a reasoned argument on the basis of evidence in support of the claim.”

By studying the history of practical thinking in general and the development of the practical theology discipline in particular, students “locate these questions within a pertinent trajectory of scholarly discourse.”

By researching and reviewing additional articles in their methods of interest, students “adopt, adapt, or construct methods of interpretation appropriate to the are of student and pertinent to the thesis question or problem.”

Through these activities and contributing to a community of learning, students fulfill the goal of Outcome 2: “This is reflected in students who are able to produce discrete forms of research-based scholarly discourse (oral presentations, essays) that display these marks of research and scholarship.”

Course Resources

Required Course Texts
To be read in common:


Specific discussions on method from the International Journal of Practical Theology.

To be Selected by Students:

Sources on post modernism and postcolonial research:


**A selection of book chapters and articles from books such as:**


Ballard, P.H. 1995. Practical theology as an academic discipline. Theology XCVIII (782), 112-122. (11 pages)


**Standard Components for Every Course**

**Course Website(s)**

- Blackboard [https://weblogin.utoronto.ca/](https://weblogin.utoronto.ca/)

This course uses Blackboard for its course website. To access it, go to the UofT portal login page at [http://portal.utoronto.ca](http://portal.utoronto.ca) and login using your UTORid and password. Once you have logged in to the portal using your UTORid and password, look for the **My Courses** module, where you’ll find the link to the website for all your Blackboard-based courses. (Your course registration with ROSI gives you access to the course website at Blackboard.) Note also the information at [http://www.portalinfo.utoronto.ca/content/information-students](http://www.portalinfo.utoronto.ca/content/information-students). Students who have trouble accessing Blackboard should ask for further help.

**Grading System**

- **A+** (90-100)
- **A** (85-89)
- **A-** (80-84)
- **B+** (77-79)
- **B** (73-76)
- **B-** (70-72)
- **Failure**

Please see the appropriate handbook for more details about the grading scale and non-numerical grades (e.g. SDF, INC, etc).

**Late Work.** Students are expected to hand in work by deadline provided, except by negotiation with the instructor. Instructor may apply a penalty of ten points in any grading category for late work.

**Course grades.** Consistently with the policy of the University of Toronto, course grades submitted by an instructor are reviewed by a committee of the instructor’s college before being posted. Course grades may be adjusted where they do not comply with University grading policy or college grading policy.

**Policies**

**Accessibility.** Students with a disability or health consideration are entitled to accommodation. Students must register at the University of Toronto’s Accessibility Services offices; information is available at [http://www.accessibility.utoronto.ca/](http://www.accessibility.utoronto.ca/). The sooner a student seeks accommodation, the quicker we can assist.

**Plagiarism.** Students submitting written material in courses are expected to provide full documentation for sources of both words and ideas in footnotes or endnotes. Direct quotations should be placed within quotation marks. (If small changes are made in the quotation, they should be indicated by appropriate punctuation such as brackets and ellipses, but the quotation still counts as a direct quotation.) Failure to document borrowed material constitutes plagiarism, which is a serious breach of academic, professional, and Christian ethics. An instructor who discovers evidence of student plagiarism is not
permitted to deal with the situation individually but is required to report it to his or her head of college or delegate according to the TST Basic Degree Handbook (linked from http://www.tst.edu/content/handbooks) and the University of Toronto Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/AssetFactory.aspx?did=4871. A student who plagiarizes in this course. Students will be assumed to have read the document “Avoidance of plagiarism in theological writing” published by the Graham Library of Trinity and Wycliffe Colleges (http://www.trinity.utoronto.ca/Library_Archives/Theological_Resources/Tools/Guides/plag.htm).

**Other academic offences.** TST students come under the jurisdiction of the University of Toronto Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm).