Introduction

Our class meets on Monday through Thursday from 9:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.

The title *Pastoral Counseling* brings together two distinct yet closely related areas:
- Pastoral ministry - includes many elements of congregational care other than counseling; yet, despite some efforts to divorce counseling from pastoring, counseling activity still remains a part of the pastor’s life regardless how specialized the organized church and society at large become.
- Counseling - includes an expansive domain of theory and practice beyond pastoring; yet, despite counseling’s increasing liaison with secular social science, psychology in particular, its roots still include the soul care that is embedded in pastoral activity.

Consider an image of *Pastoral Ministry* and *Counseling* as two overlapping circles. This course explores the area of overlap between the two circles. And, the major point of reference for the course is to study pastoral counseling within the context of pastoral care.

**Prerequisites**: None

**Course Objectives**

The content, assignments, presentations, and exams in this course are designed to challenge you in the following ways:

*Cognitive* - what you should know and understand:
- Definition, rationale, nature and purpose of counseling from a Christian perspective and, more specifically, of pastoral counseling within the context of congregational care
- Biblical foundations for pastoral counseling including a theology of counseling, core qualities in the role model of Jesus Christ, and the dynamic resources of the Word of God and the Holy Spirit in counseling
• Personal and professional characteristics, qualities and skills of an effective pastoral counselor
• Reality and diversity of problems and challenges that are present in the lives of parishioners
• Roles and responsibilities of the body of Christ and the local church for helping people with their problems
• Overview of models of counseling developed by secular and Christian psychologists and their relevance to personal and pastoral perspectives of counseling
• Specific theory and practices of models for strategic pastoral counseling from short-term and solution-focused perspectives
• Principles and practices for timely referral to resource personnel and agencies for more specialized assistance to the individual(s)
• Issues and topics of life and living that relate to counseling and pastoral care

Affective - what you should experience and value:
• Diversity of issues in life that people encounter and cope with to varying degrees of success (e.g., personal, interpersonal and family issues, developmental and identity issues, control issues, etc.)
• Uniqueness of the individual makeup, process patterns, and functioning of each person as God's creation
• Essential reality of counseling as part of a pastor’s overall parish ministry
• Unique resources within the body of Christ to help people to manage and cope with life successfully
• Your personal qualities, abilities and skills for effectively helping people with their life challenges and problems
• Potential for a supportive relationship between pastoral counseling and the theory and practice of some counseling models of secular psychology

Conative - what you should do with these insights, attitudes, and skills:
• Articulate an informed, biblical personal philosophy of counseling within the context of pastoral care
• Integrate and apply relevant theory and practice from secular models of counseling to the ministry of pastoral counseling
• Exhibit insight and wisdom in recognizing and responding to the challenging realities of life within the lives of the congregation (i.e., the shepherd watches over the sheep)
• Increase personal skills to counsel people using short-term and solution-focused models within negotiated time frames for counseling sessions
• Lead congregational growth in mutual training for more effective people-helping ministry in each other’s lives
• Document the presence of specialized counseling and related resources within your parish community for purposes of referral
• Establish clear personal guidelines for when to refer individuals to more specialized helping persons and agencies
Textbooks

**Required**
- The following books are essential for successful completion of the course requirements:


**Reference**
- The following practice-oriented books are a few of my ‘top picks’ from the Bibliography as recommends to add to your personal library:


Course Content

The content for this course is articulated in some detail through the course objectives. In summary, our time will be spent on some combination of the topics included in the following questions:

1. What is ‘pastoral’ counseling?
2. Why do we do pastoral counseling?
   a. The realities of sin and the fallen nature of people
   b. The responsibilities and challenges of life and living
   c. The promises of God for health and wholeness
   d. The mandate for total pastoral care
3. Who is the ‘pastoral counselor’?
4. What is the biblical basis for pastoral counseling?
5. What are the pastoral counselor’s resources for effective counseling:
   a. In Scripture, in Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Spirit?
   b. In the body of Christ and the local church?
c. In personal abilities, training and giftedness?
d. In the larger community?

6. What are some of the fundamental areas of mental awareness, affective sensitivity, and practical skills needed for effective pastoral counseling?
7. What can the pastoral counselor learn from secular psychology and models of counseling?
8. What can the pastoral counselor learn from models of counseling proposed by Christian counselors?
9. When and how does the pastoral counselor determine the need to refer people to more specialized helpers and agencies?
10. What does the pastoral counselor have to know and do to become proficient in the use of strategic, short-term, and solution-focused approaches to counseling?
11. What are some of the major issues and topics of life and living that lead people to need pastoral counseling? And how does the pastoral counselor respond to these needs?

Course Requirements

1. Attendance
I expect that your priority is to attend class sessions. Academic policies outline the ‘legal’ allowance for absence. This allowance is intended for unforeseen circumstances not as a ‘slush fund’ for personal convenience. Absence over the policy allowance results in a reduction of marks.

2. Class Presentations
Each class member will do TWO (2) class presentations. Each presentation will deal with one of the chapters in the Collins textbook. Details are included in a separate handout.

3. Critical Book Review
A reflective analysis and critical review of the Benner textbook, Strategic Pastoral Counseling is due on Monday April 9. Guidelines for this assignment are included in a separate handout.

4. Written Report of Interviews with Two Pastors
To personalize your awareness of the role of pastoral counseling in the ministry of pastors, you will interview two pastors in different churches. Confer with your classmates regarding whom you will be interviewing. If two or more class members intend to interview the same persons, get organized so as to set up only ONE interview time with that pastor and go as a group.

Guidelines and interview questions for this assignment are included in a separate handout. Your written report is due on Friday April 13.

5. Final Exam
On Wednesday April 18 or Thursday April 19 we will have a written exam that captures the content and process of the entire course.
Evaluation

Final grades are calculated from the following items:

- 20%  Class Presentations (2) from the Collins text
- 20%  Critical Book Review
- 20%  Written Report of Interviews with Pastors
- 40%  Final Exam

Resources/Bibliography


McMinn, Mark. *Psychology, Theology, and Spirituality in Christian Counseling*. Forest, Virginia:


Horizon College Assessment of Student Work
(based on University of Saskatchewan guidelines)

90-100% [Exceptional] – a superior performance with consistent strong evidence of:
- a comprehensive, incisive grasp of the subject matter;
- an ability to make insightful critical evaluation of the material given;
- an exceptional capacity for original, creative and/or logical thinking;
- an excellent ability to organize, to analyze, to synthesize, to integrate ideas, and to express thoughts fluently.

80-89% [Excellent] – an excellent performance with strong evidence of:
- a comprehensive grasp of the subject matter;
- an ability to make sound critical evaluation of the material given;
- a very good capacity for original, creative and/or logical thinking;
- an excellent ability to organize, to analyze, to synthesize to integrate ideas, and to express thoughts fluently.

70-79% [Good] – a good performance with evidence of:
- a substantial knowledge of the subject matter;
- a good understanding of relevant issues and a good familiarity with the relevant literature and techniques;
- some capacity for original, creative and/or logical thinking;
- a good ability to organize, to analyze and to examine the subject material in a critical and constructive manner.

60-69% [Satisfactory] – a generally satisfactory and intellectually adequate performance with evidence of:
- an acceptable basic grasp of the subject material;
- a fair understanding of the relevant issues;
- a general familiarity with the relevant literature and techniques;
- an ability to develop solutions to moderately difficult problems related to the subject material;
- a moderate ability to examine the material in a critical and analytical manner.

50-59% [Minimal Pass] – a barely acceptable performance with evidence of:
- a familiarity with the subject material;
- some evidence that analytical skills have been developed;
- some understanding of relevant issues;
- some familiarity with the relevant literature and techniques;
- attempts to solve moderately difficult problems related to the subject material and to examine the material in a critical and analytical manner, which are only partially successful.

Under 50% [Failure] – an unacceptable performance