

Fall 2022

**LEARNING ENVIRONMENT:** Online course, synchronous and asynchronous

**MEETING DATES/TIME/ZOOM:** Fall Term (September 6 – December 12, 2022)

Thanksgiving break: November 23-25

***Synchronous meeting times are on Thursdays 1.00-2.30 pm (Central Time) via Zoom:**  
Zoom details will be provided in the syllabus posted in the Canvas course site.*

1. *September 22*
2. *October 6*
3. *October 27*
4. *November 10*
5. *December 1*

- *One meeting with the D.Min. Director for the doctoral program, Dr. Emlyn Ott, prior to September 16 to ascertain a potential D.Min. director for student projects and thesis work. Please make arrangements with Dr. Ott.*
- *Two or more additional one-on-one meetings will occur for individual work on the proposal, to be arranged at student/instructor convenience. The first meeting will be between September 23 – October 5, and the last between November 29 - December 5.*
- *Three additional conversations one-on-one will occur with potential D.Min. project directors so that this proposal work has continuity with the director's input – see course schedule.*
- *Final draft of thesis proposal for this course due December 20 at noon (Central).*

**ABOUT YOUR INSTRUCTOR:** Dr. Lisa Withrow (she/her(s))

**Contact Information:** [lwithrow@bexleyseabury.edu](mailto:lwithrow@bexleyseabury.edu) (email preferred)

**Office Hours:** By appointment at mutual convenience

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** Developing a successful D.Min. thesis proposal is a complex, rigorous, and multifaceted process requiring the integration of research, writing, and organizational skills, filtered through the theological, conceptual, and reflective lenses students bring to their projects. This course presupposes the writing of a thesis proposal as integral to the successful completion of the thesis project that it describes. It imagines the thesis proposal as a map delineating the route to the completed thesis, and it invites each student to become an active cartographer of his or her own proposal/map. While the course will be adapted to the needs of the students enrolled, the following topics will be addressed:

- Thinking and writing in sophisticated theological terms
- Framing, developing, and limiting the scope of a research question
- Following the question to a working thesis statement with an argumentative edge

- Engaging in contextual theological reflection to develop the thesis argument
- Finding and using resources for an annotated bibliography and literature review
- Writing a good thesis proposal draft that maps the projected thesis project
- Learning the process for working with an advisor, reader, and writing coach (as needed) to complete the thesis proposal, submit, and conduct project/case study work, with a final thesis as the outcome of the D.Min. program

**COURSE GOALS AND OUTCOMES:** Students who successfully complete this course will

**Goal 1:** have acquired the rhetorical and organizational tools to engage a graduated process write an exemplary D.Min. thesis project as an integral part of your ministry, implicit in which is the successful writing of a fluent, comprehensive thesis proposal.

- **Course Learning Outcome:** By preparing a well-researched and well-organized thesis proposal, you will build your own platform for writing an exemplary D.Min. thesis project. By mastering the writing, researching, and organizational tools, you will complete a workable draft of your thesis proposal and have a realistic plan and “map” for writing the thesis. [D.Min. 4.1]

**Goal 2:** demonstrate critical awareness of leadership theories, congregational practices, theological reflection/underpinnings, diversity, and ethical critique to be included in the proposal and ultimately, the project.

- **Course Learning Outcome:** You will demonstrate competent learning and analysis from the D.Min. curriculum, as well as your experience thus far, in your thesis proposal by including theory, theology, critical questions, and ministerial practices relevant to your proposal. [D.Min. 1.1; 1.2]

**Goal 3:** demonstrate skills for analysis and theological reflection on organizational leadership in the past, present, and future within your own context, with an eye toward developing a project or case study analysis and conclusion about congregational development.

- **Course Learning Outcome:** You will show in-depth analysis of the congregational/organizational setting through its history, social locations, challenges, systems, and opportunities. [D.Min. 2.1]

**Goal 4:** contribute creatively to the scholarly conversation from well-honed theological and pastoral reflection grounded in their own congregational contexts.

- **Course Learning Outcome:** By inviting dialogue with sources, engendered by questions and hypotheses arising from your own ministerial context, you will be equipped to contribute creatively to the ongoing pastoral/ecclesial conversation [D.Min. 1.2; 2.2; 4.1].

**ASSESSMENT METHOD AND TOOL** will be measured by the competency and proficiency of students' completed D.Min. Thesis Proposals for this course, presented as the course's artifacts.

### **A Word About Assessment: From Course Outcome Assessment to Program Assessment**

Bexley Seabury Seminary regularly evaluates the quality of our programs using a variety of data, including documents that are deposited into student portfolios. These portfolios consist of designated student work (artifacts) from each course. Each artifact is graded and accompanied by a scored rubric that assesses the work in light of desired curricular outcomes. The designated assessment artifact for this course is the first draft of the student's D.Min. thesis proposal.

We use your portfolio to assess student learning (in the aggregate) and the effectiveness of our curricula in reaching desired goals and objectives. This process does not involve any further evaluation of your work for grading purposes. No identifying information will be included in any evaluation or report provided to our accreditors or other outside parties. For further information, see the Student Handbook. You may also talk with your instructor, your advisor, the Assessment Coordinator (Lelia Fry, [lfry@bexleyseabury.edu](mailto:lfry@bexleyseabury.edu)), or the Academic Dean, (Jason Fout, [jfout@bexleyseabury.edu](mailto:jfout@bexleyseabury.edu)).

**LEARNING METHODOLOGY:** This course focuses the practice of theological reflection and on the *writing* of the Thesis Proposal and an accompanying Annotated Bibliography of research sources. Combining a student-centered learning methodology with a discipline-driven writing pedagogy, adapted strategically to an online environment, it:

- Presupposes writing as a mode of learning in which students will learn to write a Thesis Proposal in the process of writing it, revising it, and receiving and giving feedback.
  - Approaches the writing of a thesis proposal rhetorically, as an audience-driven academic genre governed by conventions and expectations outlined in the Bexley Seabury Guidelines for Writing a Thesis Proposal (Revised 2020).
  - Invites students to integrate their own theological, contextual, pastoral-theological voices with the public, academic voice of the Thesis Proposal.
  - Emphasizes learning as a dialogical process in which students to contribute to the class conversation through sharing proposal/drafts, theological reflection on said drafts, posting course assignments on Canvas, and participating actively in online sessions.
  - Encourages students to cultivate a community ethos of diverse and dedicated pastor/scholar/writers, whose research and writing is grounded in their call to ministry, while supporting each other in the thesis proposal/project writing process.
  - Engages conversations with project director aligning with course work during the term.
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## BOOKS, READINGS, AND RESOURCES:

### Required

- Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, Joseph M. Williams, Joseph Bizup, and William T. FitzGerald, *The Craft of Research*, 4th ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016).
- Lize A. E. Booyen, Regine Bendle, and Judith K. Pringle, eds., *Handbook of Research Methods in Diversity Management, Equality, and Inclusion at Work* (Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2018). Chapters 4, 7-12, 17, 19, 22. *Note: suggest library access due to cost of this resource.*
- Clemens Sedmak, *Doing Local Theology: A Guide for Artisans of a New Humanity* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2007).
- Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011).
- Howard W. Stone and James O. Duke, *How to Think Theologically* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1996).
- C. Jeff Woods, *Designing Religious Research Studies: From Passion to Procedures* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2016).
- Lucretia B. Yaghjian, *Writing Theology Well: A Rhetoric for Theological and Biblical Writers*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London/NY: Bloomsbury, 2015).
- D.Min. Handbook materials (see Canvas)

### Recommended Writing and Research Resources:

#### Selected Web Resources:

*On annotated bibliographies:*

- <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/614/01/>
- <http://guides.library.cornell.edu/annotatedbibliography>
- <http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/AnnotatedBibliography.html>

*On writing a thesis proposal:*

<http://chronicle.com/article/Demystifying-the-Dissertation/128916/>

#### Books:

- Joan K. Bolker, *Writing Your Dissertation in Fifteen Minutes a Day: A Guide to Starting, Revising, and Finishing Your Doctoral Thesis* (New York, NY: Henry Holt, 1998).
- Natalie Goldberg, *Writing Down the Bones: Freeing the Writer Within* (Boulder, CO: Shambala, 1986 [Original ed.], 2016 [30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary ed]).
- Elaine Graham, Heather Walton, and Frances Ward, *Theological Reflection: Methods* (London, England: SCM Press, 2015).
- Anne Lamott, *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life* (New York, NY: Anchor Books/Random House, 1995).
- Patricia O'Connell Killen and John de Beer, *The Art of Theological Reflection* (New York, NY: Crossroad Publishing, 2002).
- Darren C. Marks, ed., *Shaping a Theological Mind: Theological Context and Methodology* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2002).

- Dinty W. Moore, *The Mindful Writer* (Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2016).
- Katarzyna Peoples, *How to Write a Phenomenological Dissertation: A Step-by-Step Guide* (Qualitative Research Methods Series) (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 2021).
- Mary Pipher, *Writing to Change the World* (New York, NY: Riverhead Books, 2006).
- Elizabeth Rankin, *The Work of Writing: Insights and Strategies for Academics and Professionals* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass / Wiley), 2001.
- David Sternberg, *How to Complete and Survive a Doctoral Dissertation* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1981).
- William Strunk Jr. and E.B. White, *The Elements of Style*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon, 2000).
- Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 9<sup>th</sup> ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018).

## COURSE EXPECTATIONS AND ASSIGNMENTS:

### Expectations:

1. Completion of the D.Min. Thesis Proposal in the following stages:
  - Bring a problem or question based on your D.Min. interest to the first day of Zoom class, September 22. Be prepared for peer theological reflection, social/contextual/intersectional analysis of the problem or question during class.
  - Meet individually with the instructor between September 23-October 5 for discussion about ideas and the work ahead; contact the instructor to find a date/time of mutual convenience.
  - Meet individually with potential project director between September 23-October 5 for further discussion about ideas and work ahead; contact potential project director to find a date/time of mutual convenience.
  - Create an annotated bibliography of 20 resources for discussion based on problem or question at the first meeting with the instructor. Post revised annotated bibliography on Canvas by October 6.
  - Continue to refine problem or question in theological framework. Write a first draft of the thesis statement based on the problem or question to be shared in Zoom class. Due October 6 for discussion in class. Post on Canvas after revisions by October 13.
  - Meet with group to talk through next steps, challenges, points for clarification for each project (see next point) without instructor and outside designated class time (at your convenience between October 7 - 26).
  - Meet individually with potential project director between October 7-26 for further discussion about ideas and work ahead; contact potential project director to find a date/time of mutual convenience.
  - Continue to refine thesis statement, write an introduction to the proposal, theological underpinnings/foundations, and methodology/process for the project or case reflection. Post on Canvas by November 8.
  - Draft table of contents, chapter summaries, and conclusion. Post on Canvas by November 17. Continue to refine working bibliography and annotated bibliography – for relevance and additions/subtractions.

- Meet with group to talk through next steps, challenges, points for clarification for each project (see next point) without instructor and outside designated class time (at your convenience between November 11 - 30).
  - Meet individually with potential project director between November 11-30 for further discussion about ideas and work ahead; contact potential project director to find a date/time of mutual convenience.
  - Meet individually with the instructor between November 29-December 5 for discussion about work to date; contact the instructor to find a date/time of mutual convenience.
  - Submit first draft of completed thesis proposal submitted to instructor for review. Post on Canvas by December 8.
  - Submit revised, completed draft of the thesis proposal with accompanying “Thesis Completion Plan and Timeline,” posted on Canvas by December 20 for course credit.
2. Identify a dedicated thinking, research, and writing space for your work. Submit a photo of your space on Canvas by September 21.
  3. Activate Styberg Library credentials or credentials for another local research library if you haven’t already done so by September 21.
  4. Schedule individual meeting times with instructor. (See above in Expectation 1.)
  5. Attend all Zoom class periods and participate fully with completed reading and writing assignments.

Students are expected to access the “Tech Help” resources via the button at the bottom of the Canvas home page for a description of technology requirements.

***NOTE:** Submission of the student’s Thesis Proposal for this course does not constitute official submission of the proposal for approval by Bexley Seabury. Continued work throughout the term with a thesis director, assigned early in the term through conversation with the Director of the D.Min. program, will provide a good start before the final approval (independent of the course). Final approval of the student’s Thesis Proposal by the thesis director, the D.Min. Program Director, and the Academic Dean is required before the student is authorized to proceed with conducting and/or writing of the Thesis Project.*

### **BEST PRACTICES FOR ZOOM SESSIONS:**

Zoom works best when certain criteria are met:

- The latest version of Zoom is installed. Periodically check for updates and download the latest version.
- One computer:one user. Please use your own device (including camera and mic) and zoom link. This helps everyone come to the space equally.
- If you are in a shared or noisy space, use headphones/earbuds. In general, it is normally best to keep your mic muted unless you are speaking. This helps minimize background noise.
- Minimize distractions around you (try to be in the same location for the duration of the session). If you must be in transit, mute your mic.
- Plan ahead to ensure you have a stable internet connection for the duration of the session. If your connection becomes unstable, it may be helpful to turn off your video when you speak.

- Otherwise, cameras should generally be on, unless you need to step away to take care of something. This contributes toward demonstrating your presence and participation in class during the session.
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### **COURSE GRADING AND FEEDBACK:**

*Successful completion of the Thesis Proposal Practicum is contingent upon submission of a satisfactory Thesis Proposal. No course credit will be given to students who do not meet this requirement. The Thesis Proposal will be evaluated and accorded a Pass/Fail grade, which will also be the course grade, according to the following rubrics, each of which will be given equal weight in the evaluation of the Proposal. The Proposal must exhibit the following content (70 points):*

- articulates a focused, realistic, relevant research question/problem
- posits a coherent thesis/argument in response to the question/problem
- presents a well-documented overview of “Theological Foundations” and underpinnings
- describes a logical and sequential “Process for the Project”
- exhibits a well-formulated methodology undergirding the project
- includes a clear and succinct summary of thesis chapters
- provides a comprehensive preliminary bibliography for the project
- follows Bexley-Seabury Thesis Proposal Template format
- conforms to Turabian/Chicago (9<sup>th</sup> ed.) documentation style
- is written in a style and voice engaging its readers and anticipating the originality and scholarly contribution of the completed thesis project
- addresses systemic racism, white privilege, and related justice issues as appropriate to its subject matter, context, and audience
- is submitted on the due date announced in the Course Syllabus, unless prior arrangements have been made with the instructor

*Meetings with the instructor and thesis advisor, timely submissions of all materials, and preparedness – (25 points).*

*Full participation in the course process, evidence of completed readings, and timely submissions (5 points).*

I will respond to email messages within 48 hours of receipt. I also will review assignments within a week of their submission, posting comments on Canvas. Please make sure that submissions are appropriately formatted and carefully proofread before submission.

- D.Min. students are graded on a Pass/Fail basis for the course. You will receive points on each assignment as per the chart below; at the end of the course, points accumulated must be the equivalent of a C grade (70 points or above) to pass the course.
- Please be aware that the Canvas gradebook reflects cumulative grades for assignments for your course, but the final official grade for the course will be recorded manually by the instructor in Populi.

**Bexley Seabury requires a minimum grade of C to pass a course.**

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Points</b>	<b>Description</b>
A (4.00)	96-100	Superior/Mastery
A- (3.67)	90-95	Excellent
B+ (3.33)	87-89	Very Good
B (3.00)	84-86	Good (high)
B- (2.67)	80-83	Good (low)
C+ (2.33)	75-79	Acceptable (high)
C (2.00)	70-74	Acceptable/Adequate
F (0)	< 70	Unacceptable (Fail)
<b>A grade of "P" in a Pass/Fail course is equivalent to a grade of C or above.</b>		

**Summary for Grades: Final submission – 70% (70 points); Meeting with the instructor, timely submissions of all materials, and preparedness – 25% (25 points); Full participation in the course – 5% (5 points). Late work will have 10 points deducted per day up to three days, after which the assignment will not be accepted.**



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## **COURSE SCHEDULE/CALENDAR:**

*(All synchronous class sessions will meet on Zoom. Synchronous student meetings without the instructor are established at student convenience and via platform of choice).*

**Synchronous meeting times are on Thursdays 1.00-2.30 pm (Central Time) via Zoom.**  
*Zoom details will be provided in the syllabus posted in the Canvas course site.*

**Prior to September 16, meet with D.Min. Director, Dr. Emlyn Ott.** This meeting will include a discussion about the student's project or case study focus, and in light of said focus, choice of a potential thesis director.

### **September 21**

Due: A designated space for thinking, researching, and writing. A set series of times on your calendar for this work several times per week. Be prepared to share in class on September 22. Post a photo on Canvas of you in your space under Announcements. Activate Styberg Library credentials if you have not done so.

### **September 22 (online class)** [D.Min. 1.1; 1.2; 2.1 – Goals 2, 3, 4]

Due:

1. A designated space for thinking, researching, and writing. A set series of times on your calendar for this work several times per week. Be prepared to share.
2. Read Sedmak, Stone and Duke and prepare for discussion

Content:

Course overview and Thesis Proposal Guidelines  
Discussion about Research problem or question  
Social location, context, intersectionality  
Theological reflection and why it matters (Sedmak, Stone and Duke)  
Takeaways and next steps

### **September 23 – October 5 – individual meetings with instructor at mutual convenience**

Due: Annotated bibliography of 20 resources based on research problem or question; prepare for discussion with instructor. Submit one day before meeting on Canvas under assignments. (5 points of the 25 allotted for meetings, submissions, and preparedness.)

Meet with potential project director within this timeframe.

### **October 6 (online class)** [D.Min. 1.2; 2.2; 4.1 – Goals 1, 2, 4]

Due:

1. Revised annotated bibliography of 20 resources based on problem or question. Post on Canvas by noon (Central).
2. First draft of thesis statement for discussion in class (written).
3. Read Sensing and Woods and prepare for discussion

Content:

Feedback on first drafts and next steps  
Discussion on research methods (Sensing and Woods)  
Theological Reflection

## Takeaways and next steps

***October 7-26 – meet with peer group one time (or more if desired) to talk through next steps, theological reflection, process/methodology, challenges, points for clarification for each project (on your own without instructor).***

Meet with potential project director within this timeframe.

### ***October 13***

Due: Revised draft of thesis statement based on the problem or question. Post on Canvas by noon (Central). (5%)

### ***October 27 (online class)*** [D.Min. 1.1; 1.2; 2.2 – Goals 2, 4]

Due:

1. Read Booth, Booysen et al. (Chapters 4, 7-12, 17, 19, 22).
2. Clear sense of project and process for discussion

Content:

Feedback on peer group meetings and learning  
Discussion on research methods and diversity (Booth, Booysen et al.)  
Project and process  
Theological underpinnings  
Takeaways and next steps

### ***November 8***

Due: Refined thesis statement, introduction to the proposal, theological underpinnings/foundations, and methodology/process for the project or case reflection. Post on Canvas by noon (Central). (5%)

### ***November 10 (online class)*** [D.Min. 1.2; 2.2; 4.1 – Goals 1, 4]

Due:

1. Read Yaghjian
2. Read feedback from instructor on November 8 submissions

Content:

Sophisticated theological thinking and writing (Yaghjian)  
Resourcing discussion – what additional research needs to happen in each proposal?  
Discussion of strengths and weaknesses in each proposal thus far (peer feedback)  
Takeaways and next steps

### ***November 17***

Due: Draft table of contents, chapter summaries, and conclusion. Post on Canvas by noon (Central). (5%)

***November 11-30 – meet with peer group one time (or more if desired) to talk through next steps, theological reflection, process/methodology, challenges, points for clarification for each project (on your own without instructor).***

Meet with potential project director within this timeframe.

***November 29 – December 5 – individual meetings with instructor at mutual convenience***

**December 1 (online class)** [D.Min. 2.1; 4.1 – Goals 3, 4]

Due: Prepare for discussion on voice and style of your work – preaching, pastoral, academic voices (review Yaghjian)

Content:

Summary of course and requirements for proposal and project

Next steps in the D.Min. process

Class Exercise on Voice

Student-led questions and peer conversation about thesis statement, theological underpinnings, methodology, written content, conclusion

Final takeaways

**December 8**

Due: First draft of complete thesis proposal submitted on Canvas for review by noon (Central). (5%)

**December 20**

***Due: Final draft of thesis proposal is due at noon (Central) – 70%*** [D.Min. 1.2; 1.2; 2.1; 2.2 4.1 – Goals 1-4]

**Full participation in the course** – 5%

**Participation in worship**, while not required, is an integral part of students' formation.

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**COURSE EVALUATIONS:**

Course evaluations are an important part of the educational process. They help instructors understand what is working well for a course and what might benefit from different approaches, what is helpful to students and what is not, and learning the instructor herself might accomplish. Evaluations are valuable and helpful. Thank you for taking the time to complete them.

Students taking the course for credit are expected to complete the evaluation as part of their participation in the learning experience. Auditors are encouraged to complete the evaluation as well. Evaluations will be available in Populi near the end of the course and will remain open until the grade deadline for each term. Evaluations should be completed based on your experience of the course and should not be based on your final grade. For this reason, during the grading period, you will not be able to see your grade in Populi until you have completed the evaluation. After the grade deadline, you will be able to see your grade in Populi, but you will no longer be able to share your voice through the course evaluation.

**ACADEMIC POLICIES:**

All students in Bexley Seabury courses are expected to be familiar with the following information that is provided on Canvas, in Student Resources:

- Academic policies and forms
- Requests for withdrawals, extensions, and incompletes
- Technological requirements and assistance
- Writing guidelines and assistance

- Course Netiquette
- Prohibition of plagiarism