

Asbury Theological Seminary ePLACE: preserving, learning, and creative exchange

Syllabi

eCommons

1-1-2008

IS 502 Vocation of Ministry

Steve Harper

Follow this and additional works at: <http://place.asburyseminary.edu/syllabi>

Recommended Citation

Harper, Steve, "IS 502 Vocation of Ministry" (2008). *Syllabi*. Book 2312.
<http://place.asburyseminary.edu/syllabi/2312>

This Document is brought to you for free and open access by the eCommons at ePLACE: preserving, learning, and creative exchange. It has been accepted for inclusion in Syllabi by an authorized administrator of ePLACE: preserving, learning, and creative exchange. For more information, please contact thad.horner@asburyseminary.edu.

IS502 - Vocation of Ministry
Fall 2008
Thursdays: 2:30-5:15 p.m.

Professor:

Steve Harper, Ph.D.

E-mail: steve_harper@asburyseminary.edu

Phone: (Office) 407-482-7550....and....(Personal) 407-902-5227

Course Description

This course addresses the question, How is a vocation to Christian ministry discerned, shaped, and sustained? The purpose of the course is to explore the foundations for Christian vocation by examining the connection between a call to ministry and the formation of persons for ministry. The integrating theological concept is the Wesleyan view of Holiness. The course focuses on the vocation of ordained ministry, but the principles are applicable to the whole people of God.

Textbooks

Drury, Keith. [Holiness for Ordinary People](#).

Gill, David W. [Becoming Good: Building Moral Character](#)

Guinness, O. [The Call: Finding and Fulfilling the Central Purpose of Your Life](#)

Stevens, R. Paul. [The Other Six Days: Vocation, Work, and Ministry in Biblical Perspective](#)

Willimon, William. [Calling and Character](#)

Related Readings

Dunnam, Maxie & Moore Steve. [Living Life on Purpose](#)

Palmer, Parker. [Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation](#)

Rediger, G. Lloyd. [Beyond the Scandals: A Guide to Healthy Sexuality for Clergy](#)

Rutland, Mark. [Character Matters](#)

Sire, James W. [Habits of the Mind: Intellectual Life as a Christian Calling](#)

Course Objectives

Having successfully completed this course, you should:

1. Understand the nature of Christian vocation, including God's call of all Christian disciples to ministry in the church and in the world.
2. Grasp the relationship between the personal habits, spirituality and theological reflection in the practice of ministry.
3. Understand the importance of integrity for Christian ministry through the development of virtues, character and moral formation, with a clear understanding of their relationship to boundary issues related to ethical conduct.

4. Demonstrate commitment to a life of personal and social holiness through immersion in the means of grace and service.
5. Be able to articulate a coherent narrative of one's own call, gifts and graces for ministry.
6. Project a personal vision for ministry and a development plan consistent with one's vocational discernment and vision.

Modes of Instruction

The class will be taught using these modes of instruction: (a) We will meet together as one large group for some levels of instruction and interaction; (b) The class will be organized into small groups that will emphasize "works of piety" and "works of mercy," which are integral to the course; and (c) the discipleship groups will engage in activities that provide direct experience in selected course components.

Means of Student Evaluation

1. Related to course instruction

- Your attendance at all class sessions is expected. If you are absent for more than three sessions, you will receive a failing grade for the course. This class is rooted in an assumed "covenant" of faithfulness between the professor and student... and...among the students themselves.
- You are expected to attend and actively participate in all of your covenant discipleship group meetings for the full time they meet. These groups are student led. Most meeting time is built into the regular class period. If you miss more than three sessions, you will not receive credit for this component of the course. (10% of final grade).
- By the conclusion of Module 1 you should have attended one worship service in a church that is ethnically different from yours. If you are currently worshipping in a cross-cultural setting, or have had significant cross-cultural worship experiences over a long period of time, speak with the instructor about ways to adjust this assignment. **Due October 16.** (10 % of final grade).
- Participate in the 4-8 hour social justice project with your covenant discipleship group before the end of Module 2. Each group will select a service/mission project. The project is to be completed as a group and must involve service outside the Asbury Seminary community. For example, work at a soup kitchen, help out at Bread of Life or Covenant House, provide housekeeping or lawn care for a homebound person, etc. Please clear your project with the instructor. (Note: students who live a long distance from other group members may petition to participate in another service/mission project closer to home.) The group secretary will collect from each group member a one page personal report that describes the service experience and submit the reports to the professor. **Due no later than October 30 .** (10% of final grade)

2. Module 1 Paper

You will prepare a five page “in-process” personal, paper that integrates the elements of values, calling and mission on the matrix. Utilize readings, lectures, class discussions and assignments in writing the paper. The central theme of the paper is your **personal call**. Write your reflections on your values and your call to Christian ministry in light of God’s mission to the world. Discuss what you learned from the results of your DISC instrument, your sense of your spiritual gifts, talents and work experience that will help, or hinder, your future ministry and how you see your seminary education as a means for preparing you for the work of “equipping the saints” for ministry? This paper should provide an answer to the question, “**How is your calling an expression of personal and social holiness?**” In this class your papers are personal reflections. They should be written with first person pronouns without an attempt at speaking to, or preaching to others.

Your paper should be double spaced, with one-inch margins and 12-point font (e.g. Times New Roman). Document your sources in the body of the paper, for example, (Guinness, 30). Give the bibliographical information at the end of your paper. **Due October 9.** (10% of final grade)

Holiness

Mission



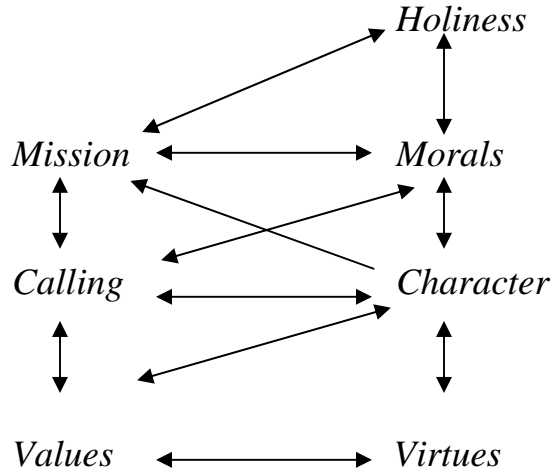
Calling



Values

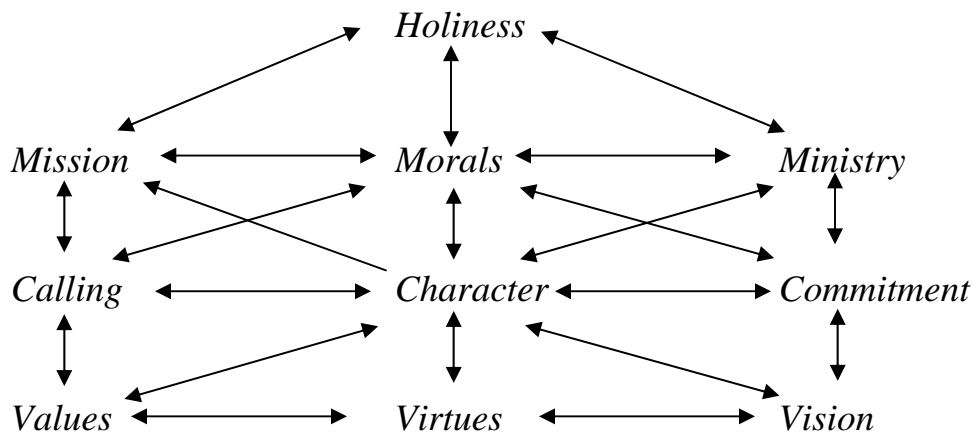
3. Module 2 Paper

You will write a personal five to six page integrative paper on the integration of values, calling, mission, virtues, character, and morals—using the readings, lectures, class discussions and assignments for modules 1 and 2. The central theme of this paper will be on **integrity**. Let your paper answer this question, “**How is your integrity an expression of personal and social holiness?**” Review the writing instructions for the Module I paper, but do not merely repeat what you wrote in that paper. The assignment is a cumulative experience. **Due October 30.** (10% of final grade)



4. Major Position Paper

You will write a 10 to 12 page paper that integrates all class material to date from Modules 1, 2 and 3. The purpose of this assignment is to help you create a cohesive understanding of ministry. **The central theme of the paper should be: “My vision for a life for ministry.”** Write about the present state of your vision for your future in ministry. Include your views about working in a multi-cultural world with persons from different races, socio-economic and with a gender different from your own. Describe the kind of personal, family and institutional commitments you are willing to make to fulfill your calling to ministry. **Answer the question: “how will a life of personal and social holiness impact my calling, character and commitments?”** Again, avoid *repeating* things you wrote for Modules 1 and 2. Integrate earlier learnings into the larger purposes of this paper. The completion of this document should help you choose Seminary courses that will best prepare you for fulfilling your vision for ministry. It may also provide material for responding to written and personal interview questions in the Christian Formation Program. regarding your call, motivation and preparation for ministry. **Due December 4 . (25% of final grade)**



4. Creative Project: Your small group will develop a presentation that expresses your collective interpretation of this phrase: “vocation of ministry.” The presentation can be in artistic modes (painting, sculpture, poetry, drama, creative writing, photo essay, original music composition), or you may choose another form of presentation (devotional guide that focuses on “call” and “vocation”; series of lesson plans that deal with “call” and “vocation” for an age-specific class; worship service, etc.). It is expected that this will be a fresh work. You are to get approval from Dr. Harper for your idea before proceeding. This project represents an important course assignment because it reflects work done in community. Each person in the group is expected to invest a *minimum of 8 hours* in the preparation of the project. Some will spend much more time than that. **Projects will be shared in class on November 20 and December 4 .**

Note: Some in-class time will be devoted to envisioning and developing the creative projects, but you will need to plan other times to meet (e.g. at lunch or dinner hours) in order to be sure your project is ready to present. Students also make use of the First Class system to develop projects in between class days.

In addition to the presentation, each group member will submit an individual log of your time invested in the project, a brief description of your contribution to the group project, and evaluation of each team member’s participation in the project. The group will also submit materials used in making the presentation.

Creative Project Grading Criteria will respond to the following questions:

- a. How substantial was your individual contribution to the project? (Did your contribution help to move the group project forward to completion in a significant way?)
- b. How well did your group present the project to the class? (Did it reflect “one” mind or did it seem pieced together and disjointed?)
- c. How well did your project integrate course content and personal reflection? (Does your project demonstrate an understanding of course content in addition to your personal journey?)
- d. How well prepared was the written material your group submitted in conjunction with the project? E.g. style, evidence of editing, organization, content. (25% of final grade)

Grading Policy

Papers

All papers must be typed, double-spaced, 1” margin, using a 12-point font, such as Times New Roman. Papers must adhere to MLA format according to Slade. The pages of the paper must be numbered. Dr. Harper will provide additional instructions for the papers. Warning: web based search engines create temptations for plagiarism. Resist these temptations because new software programs also offer creative ways to discover

plagiarism. Keep your integrity, and thereby avoid embarrassment. Discovered plagiarism for any part of this course results in an “F” for the entire course. Also...a letter-grade deduction (e.g. from A to B) will be assessed for every week that your paper is late. Late papers receive a grade, but little written feedback. If you need to negotiate an alternate due date, consult with the Professor BEFORE the assignment is due.

Please note: we do not have an A+ in our grading system. Dr. Harper reserves a grade of “A” for work he deems to be of particular excellence. This means you will normally receive a grade of “A-“ or lower for work you do.

Incomplete Policy

A grade of “I” denotes course work has not been completed due to an **unavoidable** emergency, which does not include failure to turn in course work or attending to church work or other employment. Incompletes are seldom given. See the Asbury Seminary Catalog for further clarification.

Small Group Guidelines

1. By the second week of class, you will be placed in a small group of 4-6 persons. Because teamwork and spiritual formation is an important part of this course, in-class time is created for group work to facilitate your ease of meeting so that you will rarely have to juggle your schedule to find a meeting time outside of class. Exceptions include the social-service project and creative project meetings.
2. The groups will meet for one introductory meeting, then for the remainder of the semester the groups will focus on the dimensions that tie this course together. Each of these units should be related to, and integrated into the dimension of holiness of heart and life, both as a gift from God, and your responsibility for growth in personal and social holiness. Group members are expected to contribute biblical references, resources from reading and personal experiences directly related to the each subject for discussion.
3. Each group will be student led. Weekly leadership should be rotated so that all members will lead a group session at least once.. At the conclusion of each session, assign someone to lead at the next session.
4. In order to effectively participate in the group, each member should read in advance any material to be discussed.
5. Each group should covenant to keep group conversations confidential among group members.

Class Schedule

Module 1: Understanding the Nature of Christian Values and Vocation in the context of God's Mission to the World. September 4, 11, 18, and 25

Goals:

At the completion of this module, you should:

1. Have a clear understanding of core Christian values.
2. Articulate your personal core values and how they influenced your call to ministry.
3. Discuss how your values shaped your response to your call to ministry.
4. Relate your calling to your understanding of a personal mission in life and how this connects to the mission of God.

September 4: Sustaining a Life for Christian Ministry.

This session provides an introduction to the course, and the organization of small groups.

Reading: Note---weekly assigned readings are to be completed before the class session.

Covenant Group Focus: You will introduce yourself by sharing the features of your spiritual journey that led you to seminary. Be prepared to share your key values. Answer the question: how do my values relate to how I got to seminary and how my values will guide my future ministry?

September 11: Calling

This week's discussion will be on the discernment process in a call to ministry, with particular attention to the place of values in that process.

Reading: Guinness, Ch. 1-14
Stevens, Ch. 1-3

Covenant Group Focus: You will share your discernment of God's call upon your life. How has the reading influenced your understanding of your call? What are the main differences between a "career" (institutional) and a "calling" (biblical and theological)? What are the strengths and weaknesses of each?

September 18: Responding to the Call

This week's discussion focuses the ideas of personal strengths, spiritual gifts, community life in relationship to vocation and call

Reading: Guinness, Ch. 15-22
Stevens, Ch. 4-6

Projective Assessment: "DISC "

(see remainder of this session at the top of the next page)

Covenant Group Focus: Share your perceived gifts and graces for ministry, and limitations that could hinder effectiveness in ministry. Consider this statement, “We are called in community.” As time permits, share the most-important thing you’ve encountered so far about vocation

September 25: Mission

To complete this module we will be discussing the importance of calling for all of God’s people to participate in His mission to the world and how we are equipped for this task.

Reading: Stevens, Ch 7 through the Epilogue

Covenant Group Focus: You will use this session to help you and others in your group develop a theology of ministry that includes the whole people of God, yet has room for ordained and salaried spiritual leadership. Indicate how the reading and the DISC instrument help your understanding of your call to participate in Christian ministry? Consider this statement: “We are called for mission.

October 2: No Class

Module 2: The Call to Integrity. October 9, 16, 23

Goals

At the completion of this module, you should:

1. Understand the relationship between virtue ethics and the fruit of the Spirit;
2. Develop a list of personal Christian virtues for prayer and practice;
3. Distinguish the difference between personality development and character transformation;
4. Understand the importance of moral behavior that leads to a life of integrity;
5. Formulate a theological understanding of temptation;
6. Be receptive to the gift of the Holy Spirit and develop a plan for the process of growth in a life of personal and social holiness.

October 9: Christian Virtues

This week will be an introduction to the influence of virtues on Christian integrity. The virtuous life will be viewed in relation to the Wesleyan understanding of holiness.

Reading: Gill, entire book

Module I Paper Due

Covenant Group Focus: Group members will study the suggested scripture lessons, discuss the relationship between virtue ethics and the fruit of the Spirit, and develop a plan for growth in personal virtues.

October 16: Calling and Character

This session will focus on the similarities and differences between personality development and character formation for Christian leaders.

Reading: Willimon, (entire book)

Cross-Cultural Worship Experience—report due

Covenant Group Focus: Share with the group what you perceive to be your character traits. Use some of your time to begin envisioning your creative project class presentation.

October 23: Morality in Christian Leadership.

This session will focus on the dynamics of temptation and the dangers of the misuse of power. The role of physical, mental, relational and spiritual health to issues of integrity will be discussed.

Reading: Nothing for this week.

Covenant Group Focus: If any group member's congregation has gone through a scandal, discuss how it was a manifestation of a "breakdown of morality" in accordingly).

Last Day to Submit Social Service Project Reports

Covenant Group Focus: Discuss the role and significance of proactive ethic, for both individuals and congregations. Use some of your time to further develop your creative project.

Module 3: Commitment to a vision for ministry. October 30, November 6, 13

Goals

At the completion of this module, you should

1. Understand the relationship between the kind of person you want to be and the work you want to do.
2. Decide on the commitments you are making to yourself, others and institution.
3. Develop a life plan that will help prepare you for the kind of ministry you are called to do.
5. Integrate all points of the matrix for a vocation of ministry.

October 30: Formulating a vision for a vocation of ministry

This class will be a discussion of the importance of having a vision for the kind of person you want to be and the specific form of ministry you want to do in order to fulfill your call to ministry.

Required Reading: Martin Luther King Jr, "I Have a Dream"

Module 2 Paper Due

(rest of this session at the top of the next page)

Covenant Group Focus: Come to class with a one-paragraph statement of your vision for ministry. Group members will assist each other in refining their vision for ministry during seminary and the first five-ten years after seminary.

November 6: Commitments

This class is an examination of personal, social and institutional commitments you are willing to make in order to live a life of Christian ministry. If you plan to be ordained, or commissioned, you should bring to class the questions that will be asked of you in the examinations by your judicatory. Also bring a copy of personal commitments to God, self, others and institutions that you are making at this stage in your call and preparation for ministry.

Reading: Your denomination's ordination requirements.

Covenant Group Focus: Share your list of commitments and ask for feedback from group colleagues. Discuss Sire's book, especially, his understanding of the connection between intellectual virtues and holiness.

November 13: Holiness of Heart and Life

This class will focus on what John Wesley referred to as "entire sanctification." Prayers for holiness of heart and life will be made.

November 20: Small Group Closure Experience (Session One)

November 27: Fall Break

December 4: Small Group Closure Experience (Session Two)

December 11: No Class (no final exam)