

DRAFT

MNST 5125 Introduction to Pastoral Care and Counseling

North Park Theological Seminary

Fall 2026 3 credit hours, hybrid format

Synchronous Sessions, Thursdays 7:30pm-9:00pm

In person/Immersive Dates:

September 11th 9:00am-5:00pm

Instructor Information

Elizabeth Odette Pierre, PhD

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Email: eopierre@northpark.edu

Office Hours: By appointment virtually or in person

Office Number 310

Course Description:

This course considers pastoral care and counseling issues specific to contemporary congregational contexts. It will address h care approaches that are grounded in contextual pastoral theologies. It will focus on the pastoral concerns of the congregation, families, and individuals, as well as the broader community issues that contemporary pastors must face and will emphasize the development of skills and attitudes necessary for effective and theologically coherent pastoral care and counseling. This course also includes exposure and practice with various approaches to pastoral assessment, counseling, and referral. This course requires some local travel to churches and associated ministries. Pedagogical approaches: case method, role play, demonstrations, readings, and lecture (from the catalog).

This course is designed to help students become more effective and theologically reflective as pastoral caregivers. Developing listening and empathic skills will be integral to this course. It will provide an introduction to basic pastoral care frameworks along with its relationship to psychological and developmental theories. The role of empathy, intercultural perspectives, issues of trauma and loss in pastoral care will be reflected upon theologically and psychologically through lecture, readings, movies, and class and group discussions. Finally, this class will provide ways for students to grow in assessing their own strengths and growth edges and learn how this may facilitate or impede their effectiveness as pastoral care givers.

Course Objectives:

1. Students will understand the different modes of pastoral care and learn how to apply them in their ministry.
2. Students will understand fundamental psychological and developmental theories and how they assist with providing care and counseling.
3. Students will develop basic listening and empathy skills.
4. Students will reflect upon the cultural issues and their impact on pastoral care.
5. Students will learn how think critically, theologically, and systematically in pastoral care situations.
6. Students will gain greater self-awareness in order to foster healthier interpersonal relationships and practice.

Required Texts for Course:

Doehring, Carrie. *The Practice of Pastoral Care: Postmodern approach*, 2nd Edition. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015.

Fortune, Marie. *Sexual Violence: The Sin Revisited*, 2nd Edition. Cleveland, Ohio: The Pilgrim Press, 2005.

Gilbert, Roberta M. *Extraordinary relationships: A New Way of Thinking about Human Interactions*, 2nd Edition. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2017.

Herman, Judith. *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence from Domestic Abuse to Political Power*, 2nd Edition. New York, NY: Basic Books, 2015.

Lartey, Emmanuel Y. *In Living Color: An Intercultural Approach to Pastoral care and Counseling*/ Second Edition. New York, NY: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2003.

Anderson, Herbert, and Kenneth R. Mitchell. *All our Losses, all our Grievs: Resources for Pastoral Care*. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983.

Nichols, Michael. P and Martha B. Strauss. *The Lost Art of Listening: How Learning to Listen Can Improve Relationships*, 3rd Edition. New York: The Guilford Press, 2021.

Requirements:

- **Weekly attendance online**
 - It is expected that you keep your camera on throughout the class for full engagement. Your presence is just as important as those in the classroom.
- **Class Participation**
 - Small group time

- We will break into small groups almost on a weekly basis to discuss readings and movies/documentaries.

ASSESSMENTS

Due WEEKLY

1. READING REFLECTIONS and RESPONSE

Students will submit a brief written reflection on assigned readings.

Students will also respond to at least 2 of their colleagues' reflections.

The discussions will be in groups of 6. You will respond only to those within your group.

Initial Post:

Initial post is between 500-1000 words long, summarizing and critiquing the readings. Please include your own insights and questions and how the readings may impact how you engage ministry. I also encourage you to consider how COVID19 and other recent events (political, international, etc.) apply to what you are learning.

Response:

Response to colleague's post is 100-300 words. Provide feedback, ask questions or for clarification and/ share resources.

DUE

2. 12 STEP/SUPPORT PAPER: Report on Support Groups Amidst COVID19

3-5-page paper, Times Roman 12 font, double spaced, paper describing how support groups (see below) are navigating care in your community considering current restrictions and how churches can support congregants with addictions.

For this paper, do some online research on 1 of the following support groups (see below) to learn what support is available during this time. If possible, speak with an administrator of a support group in your area/neighborhood. Here is what I would like you to answer in your paper:

- How have support groups adjusted since the pandemic?
- How might churches support those in their congregations who are struggling with addiction at this time?
 - How will you apply this knowledge? Please note that this may simply mean informing your congregation of the resources that are available.
- What emerged for you emotionally and/or spiritually during this process?

OR

If you are comfortable, you can visit an actual meeting. Please include the following in your paper:

- Your thoughts and feelings prior and during the meeting.

- Describe the people and setting as vividly as you can. What do you see? Smell? Hear?
- Describe any concerns or fears that you have prior and during the meeting.
- Where did you sit and why?
- What makes such groups so appealing and healing for participants?
- Where do you see and experience God in the meeting?
- How might you apply what you learned and experienced personally or in your ministry context?

Here is a list of support groups that you can contact. If there is a support group that you would like to write on, and it's not listed here, please let me know.

SUPPORT GROUPS

- Alcoholic Anonymous
- Narcotics Anonymous
- Al-Anon Family Groups
- Overeaters Anonymous
- Sex Addiction (SAA)

3. GROUP PRESENTATIONS

Approximately 1 in 5 adults in the U.S.—43.8 million, or 18.5%—experiences mental illness in a given year.¹ As pastors you will inevitably encounter congregants who are struggling with a mental illness or mental illnesses. Therefore, it will be important to learn basic pastoral care skills to support congregants and their families.

Presentations are 30 minutes long, 15 minutes for feedback, questions, etc.

Students will have the opportunity to research and present on a mental illness such as the following:

Alcohol Use
 Bipolar
 Major Depression
 Eating Disorders (Binge Eating or Anorexia)
 General Anxiety Disorder
 Neurodevelopmental disorders such as: Autism, Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity (ADHD)
 Obsessive Compulsive Disorder

¹ <https://www.nami.org/Learn-More/Mental-Health-By-the-Numbers>

Post- Traumatic Stress Disorder
 Schizophrenia
 Substance Abuse (Feel free to focus on a specific substance).

Given the nature of this topic, I recognize that the presentation will not be very comprehensive, but you will notice that there are consistent themes among the mental illnesses which are critical for you to comprehend as ministers.

Psych Info, JSTOR, Psych articles and ATLA are just a few databases that will be helpful for your research. Please answer the following questions for your presentation:

- a. **What is the etiology(cause) of the mental illness/disorder?**
- b. **What are the symptoms?**
- c. **What treatments are helpful?**
- d. **What are the possible theological/spiritual implications for persons who struggle with this particular mental illness?**
- e. **What role does contextual factors such as race, class, gender, etc. play?**
- f. **Include a list of resources that will be helpful for supporting individuals with this mental health illness.**
- g. **Provide practical ways of how you will implement what you have learned within your context.²**

DUE

4. FINAL PAPER

Genogram

Genogram with 7-10 page, Times Roman 12, double spaced, written reflection (**Further instructions are posted on CANVAS**)

- This is an elaborate drawing of your family system, their relationships to each other and to you.
- Reflection will consist of the family dynamics, critical family issues, the strengths and growth edges of your family that emerge from the genogram and how this may impact your role as pastoral care giver and your ministry.

OR

2. Case Study

- Write a 7-10-page paper, Times Roman 12, double spaced on how you will provide pastoral care to **ONE** of the following families. Please note that you

² Each student in the group will briefly state how they plan to apply what they learned.

choose the context and racial identities of families and others involved.

- 1) A family whose teenage son was shot and killed by a police officer during an altercation at his high school.
- 2) A family whose teenage daughter was raped by an acquaintance at a high school party.
- 3) A family whose young son was a victim of a school shooting.
- 4) A co-pastor has been accused of sexual harassing a congregant.
- 5) Congregants who have been affected by COVID19
 - You are welcome to use a current case in your congregation. Please meet with instructor for further instruction.

In your case study:

- Include an outline of a sermon that you would preach to your congregation. Please include key biblical texts.
- Include the pastoral function (healing, sustaining, liberating, empowering, etc.) that would be most appropriate for this crisis. There is no right or wrong answer, just make sure to provide a rationale for your choice by drawing upon the materials from the course and/or other academic resources.

Class Meeting Schedule and Reading Assignments

GRADING SCALE.

A: Superior work (A = 95–100; A- = 93–94) This grade applies to exceptional work, the quality achieved through excellence of performance, not merely the fulfillment of the course requirements.

B: Above average (B+ = 91-92; B = 88-90; B- = 86-87) This grade applies to meritorious work, definitely above average, applied to more than the fulfillment of requirements.

C: Average (C+ = 84-85; C = 80-83; C – = 78-79) This grade applies to average work that still fulfills the course requirements.

D: Unsatisfactory (D+ = 76-77; D = 72-75; D – = 70-71) This grade, while indicating the student has completed a course, is to be understood as reflecting below average work. Course work receiving this grade will not be counted toward a degree.

F: Failure (69 and below) To receive credit in the subject, the course must be repeated.

ADDITIONAL COURSE GUIDELINES

- **Attendance is required for successful completion of class.**
 - **Late submission of assignments will affect student's grade: a half grade deduction for each day late.**

ACADEMIC HONESTY

In keeping with our Christian heritage and commitment, North Park University is committed to the highest possible ethical and moral standards. Just as we will constantly strive to live up to these high standards, we expect our students to do the same. To that end, cheating of any sort will not be tolerated. Students who are discovered cheating will receive a failing grade on the assignment and are subject to discipline up to and including failure of a course and expulsion. Our definition of cheating includes but is not limited to:

1. Plagiarism – the use of another’s work as one’s own without giving credit to the individual. This includes using materials from the internet.
 2. Copying another’s answers on an examination.
 3. Deliberately allowing another to copy one’s answers or work.
 4. Signing an attendance roster for another who is not present.
 5. Use of ChatGPT or other AI composition software to impersonate individual assignments.
- For additional information, see the [Seminary Academic Catalog](#), pp. 25–26.

ACCOMMODATIONS

North Park is committed to creating an inclusive learning environment. If you anticipate or experience any barriers to learning in this class related to a disability, contact the Center for Student Engagement by email ada@northpark.edu or phone at 773-244-5737 to schedule an appointment with the Learning Specialist. You can also stop by The Center for Student Engagement, located on the first floor of the Johnson Center.

TITLE IX

Students who believe they may have experienced sexual misconduct, sexual harassment, domestic violence, dating violence, or stalking should contact the Title IX Coordinator (773) 244-5664 or TitleIX@northpark.edu to learn more about reporting options, resources, and support services.

As members of the North Park faculty, we are concerned about the well-being and development of our students and are available to discuss any concerns. Faculty members are private resources meaning we are legally obligated to share information about the behavior reported above with the University’s Title IX coordinator. If you are unsure whether you want your concerns disclosed to the Title IX Coordinator, we encourage you to contact Counseling Support Services at (773) 244-4897 or counseling@northpark.edu.

Please refer to North Park’s [Safe Community](#) site for reporting, contact information, and further details.

INCOMPLETE GRADES

If, due to extenuating circumstances (specifically, pregnancy, illness, personal and family issues, military assignment, etc.), a student anticipates they will be unable to complete course work within the allotted time, that student may request a grade of incomplete from the course instructor before the last week of class clearly stating the reason(s) for this request. Overscheduling and/or lack of self-discipline are not considered extenuating circumstances. If the request is timely and meets the criteria, student and instructor will submit the incomplete grade form and the grade for that class will be listed as “I” until the last day of the following semester. If coursework is not submitted by the last day of the following semester the listing of “I” will automatically be changed to “F.” For the full policy, see page 15 of the [Seminary Academic Catalog](#).

Class Meeting Schedule and Reading Assignments

August 27th 2026

Introductions

Orientation to Course and Class Structure

Listen, Listen, Listen! Growing in Listening and Empathic Skills

Read: Nichols and Strauss, *The Art of Listening*, Parts 1 & 2

Read: Doebling, *The Practice of Pastoral Care*, Chapters 1-3

September 3rd 2026

Overview of the History of Pastoral Care

Read: W.A. Clebsch and C.R. Jackle, *Pastoral Care in Historical Perspective*, Parts 1 and 3*

*Will be uploaded on Canvas

Read: Lartey, *In Living Color*, Chapter 1

September 11th 2024 IMMERSIVE DAY, 9:00am-5:00pm

Role Plays

Lecture on Mental Health and the Church

Mental Illness Presentation Group Break Out and Prep

Read: Nichols and Strauss, *The Art of Listening*, Parts 3

September 17th Instructions for Genogram Assignment

Group Activity

Role Play

Read: Doebling, *The Practice of Pastoral Care*, Chapters 6 & 7

Nichols and Straus, Part 4

Listen: *It Didn't Begin with You* Summary: by Mark Wolleyn

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QJEffQ4P0Xo>

September 24, 2026

Introduction to Psychological Theories and Theories of Human Development:

Watch: Video: Everybody Rides the Carousel

Read: Kelcourse, *Human Development and Faith*, Chapter 1

Will be uploaded on Canvas

October 1st 2026

Introduction to Psychological Theories and Theories of Human Development:

Watch: Video: Everybody Rides the Carousel

Read: Kelcourse, *Human Development and Faith*, Chapter 1 continued

Read: Nichols and Strauss, Part 3

October 8th 2026

Family Systems and Pastoral Care

Read: Carter and McGoldrick, *The Expanded Family Life Cycle*, 5th ed. Chapter 1

Will be uploaded on Canvas

Read: Gilbert, *Extraordinary relationships: A new way of thinking about human interactions*, Chapters: 2, 5, & 6

October 15th 2026

Cultural Issues and Pastoral Care

Watch: Documentary: Time for Burning

Read: Lartey, *In Living Color*, All

Read: Pineda-Madrid, *Cultural Symbolic Female Representations of Suffering*

Will be uploaded on Canvas

October 22nd, 2026

READING WEEK-NO CLASS

October 29th 2026

Pastoral Care and Violence

Watch: Documentary: Broken Vows

Read: Fortune, *Sexual Violence: Sin Revisited*: Chapters: 2, 6, & 10

Read: Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, Chapters 2, 3, 5, & 9

November 5th 2026

Guest Lecturer

Pastoral Care and Navigating Sexuality

Read: *Clifton-Soderstrom Freedom For All*

<https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2018/september/jackie-hill-perry-gay-girl-good-god.html>

* *Will be uploaded on Canvas*

Watch: Why Does God Care Who I Sleep With?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WNHkOo78gJE>

November 12th 2026

Grief Issues in Pastoral Care

Read: Mitchell and Anderson, *All Our Losses*, ALL

Read: Sheppard, *Mourning the Loss of Cultural Selfobjects: Black Embodiment and Religious Experience After Trauma*

November 19th 2026

PRESENTATIONS

November 26th 2026

PRESENTATIONS

December 3rd 2026

Establishing Boundaries in Pastoral Care

Read: Doebling, *The Practice of Pastoral Care*, Chapter 4

Read: Pross, *Burnout, Vicarious Traumatization and its Prevention*
Will be uploaded on CANVAS

Watch:

Optional Read: Capps, *Giving Counsel*, Chapter 5