



VSFL 5000 Flourishing in Seminary
North Park Theological Seminary
Fall 2026, Mondays 5:45–6:45pm CT
1 credit hour

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This pass/fail foundational course is designed to support seminarians in navigating their first semester with purpose and resilience. Blending practical skills with spiritual formation, the course equips students to thrive holistically in their theological vocation. Topics include interpreting syllabi, managing time effectively, engaging in communal learning, and cultivating study as a form of worship. Through guided coaching, reflection, and peer interaction, students will develop habits that sustain both academic success and spiritual well-being.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. Interpret and plan around academic expectations and course requirements.
2. Develop sustainable time management and study habits.
3. Recognize needs and seek appropriate resources.
4. Integrate spiritual disciplines with academic routines.
5. Build supportive relationships and engage in collaborative learning.

REQUIRED MATERIALS

A monthly and weekly planner (digital or physical)

ASSESSMENTS & GRADING

1. **Weekly Reflection** (40% of grade, due weekly). Each week students will devote 45 minutes to written reflection on set questions, listed within schedule below. These are due at 11:59pm the Sunday prior to class meetings.
2. **Time Management Plan** (25% of grade)
 - a. **Time Audit** (10% of grade, due Sept 13). A three-week time audit will be collected and submitted, serving as a basis for both reflection on stewardship of time and building a realistic, balanced weekly rhythm.
 - b. **Semester and Weekly Schedule** (10%, due Sept 20). Both semester-at-a-glance and weekly schedules will be built, drawing on the time audit, integrating each facet of responsibility.
 - c. **Assignment Chunking** (5%, due Oct 4). Students will subdivide a large course assignment into its constituent parts, calendarizing completion of each.
3. **Resources Plan** (15% of grade). Students will make direct connections with key academic and peer resources, reflecting on how they might benefit from these resources across their seminary journey.
 - a. **Writing Center Visit** (5%, due Nov 1)



- b. **Instructor Meeting** (5%, due Nov 8)
- c. **Community Connection** (5%, due Nov 15)
- 4. **Flourishing Plan** (20% of grade, due Dec 11). By the end of the semester, students will design a personalized plan for success, outlining: (a) a theological reflection on your vocational as a seminarian and metaphor for integrating study with your life of faith (1 page), (b) key habits and rhythms that sustain you, and (c) support systems and resources you will continue to access across your seminary journey.

This class is graded pass/fail. A minimum of 70% and consistent attendance is needed to pass.

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.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Your experience in this class is important to me. North Park is committed to creating inclusive and accessible learning environments consistent with federal and state law. If you have already established your accommodations, please share your accommodation letter with me so we can discuss how your accommodations will be implemented in this course. If you have not yet established services and have a temporary health condition or permanent disability that requires accommodations, please email the Disability Access Specialist or contact by phone (773-244-5737). Student Engagement facilitates the interactive process that establishes reasonable accommodations.

TITLE IX & EQUITY

In accordance with Title IX and Equity policies, North Park employees who become aware of any incident of discrimination, harassment, or retaliation based on sex, gender—including pregnancy or related medical conditions—and other protected classes are required by policy to notify North Park University's Title IX & Equity Team by submitting a report [here](#). The Title IX coordinator will respond and manage concerns about students. The senior director of Human Resources will respond to and manage concerns about employees. You can obtain more information at the [Title IX](#) and [Equal Opportunity](#) web pages.

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 the Seminary Academic Catalog.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Aug 24 | The Seminarian's Vocation: Integration and Integrity

- Post-class reflection (9/28): How do you articulate your primary *vocation*? How does your new status as a seminarian fit with that primary vocation? What do you see as the connection between study and discipleship, if any? Study and worship?
- Post-class activity (due 9/13): Begin completing your time audit, following the audit worksheet posted in Canvas.

Aug 31 | Syllabus Shock & Beginning with the End in Mind

- Pre-class reflection (due 9/30): After reading all fall semester course syllabi beginning to end, reflect on the following questions. What emotions or thoughts surfaced as you reviewed the semester's course requirements in a single setting? As you look at your course requirements side by side, are there common or divergent weekly rhythms? Common or divergent submission deadlines? Are there any ways the expectations of course *production* (papers, projects, etc.) might shape how you *integrate* course content (readings, lectures, etc.)?
- Post-class activity (due 9/13): Continue completion of your time audit, submitting 9/13.

Sept 7 | Labor Day; class does not meet

Sept 14 | Time and Attention: Developing Realistic Rhythms

- Pre-class reflection (due 9/13): What do you know about your own tendencies when it comes to *time*, its use and misuse? What strategies have you found helpful for using time effectively for coursework? What competes with your attention *during* times of study?
- Pre-class activity (due 9/13): Submit your time audit.
- Post-class activity (due 9/20): Build and submit your semester-at-a-glance calendar and a weekly rhythm, following steps posted in Canvas.

Sept 21 | Ignite Intensives; class does not meet

Sept 28 | One Thing at a Time: Dividing and Conquering

- Pre-class reflection (due 9/27): How do you determine how to *fill* the time you set aside for study? How do you divide assignments (reading, writing, etc.) within available time? What strategies do you use to tackle a large, multi-part assignment (paper, project, etc.)? [Time check: What worked well in my rhythm this week? Where did I feel rushed or drained? What do I want to adjust for next week?]
- Post-class activity (due 10/4): "Chunk" your course requirements into logical parts and map distinct tasks into your study calendar. Choose a large end-of-semester project to "chunk," which you'll submit in writing.

Oct 5 | Reading for Meaning

- Pre-class reflection (due 10/4): Reflect on your experience with assigned course readings this semester. How difficult has it been for you to complete all assigned readings? How do you note and/or retain what you read? What challenges have you experienced? [10-minute time check: What worked well in my rhythm this week? Where did I feel rushed or drained? What do I want to adjust for next week?]
- Pre-class submission (due 10/4): Submit your "chunking" worksheet.

- Guest: Paul de Neui
- Post-class activity (due 10/18): Over reading week, practice reading for comprehension for at least 30 minutes/day between now and our October 19 class session.

Oct 12 | Fall Reading Week; class does not meet

Oct 19 | Academic Resources & Asking for Help

- Pre-class reflection (due 10/18): What academic resources have been most helpful to you in the past? How do you know when you need help, and how comfortable do you feel asking for it? After reviewing the [services offered through the Writing Center](#) (noting tabs for graduate students), what are you interested in exploring? What questions do you have about the services offered? [Time check: What worked well in my rhythm this week? Where did I feel rushed or drained? What do I want to adjust for next week?]
- Guest: Suzanne Shenker (Writing Center)
- Post-class activity (due 11/1): Schedule a meeting with a writing coach to discuss an upcoming assignment prior to our 11/2 class session. Reflect on your experience in your 11/1 pre-course reflection.

Oct 26 | Communicating with Your Instructor

- Pre-class reflection (due 10/25): How comfortable do you feel communicating with your professors, whether by email or in office hours? What barriers exist (internal and/or external), and what benefit might emerge from this communication? [Time check: What worked well in my rhythm this week? Where did I feel rushed or drained? What do I want to adjust?]
- Guest: Elizabeth Pierre
- Post-class activity (due 11/8): Schedule a meeting with one of your professors from this semester. Get to know them better; raise questions you have; ask for their input on your progress and any suggestions or encouragements they have. Reflect on your experience in your 11/8 pre-class reflection.

Nov 2 | The Learning Community & Peer Accountability

- Reflection (due 11/1): Part 1: What did you learn about the Writing Center that you didn't know before our Oct 19 class session? How might you draw on this resource moving forward? Part 2: Reflect on your connection to the North Park Seminary learning community. Over the course of this first semester, have you begun to develop relationships with classmates? Have you connected outside of class—whether to study together or in parallel or to pray for one another (etc.)? Have you connected to the larger learning community in any way (joining community worship, a peer mentor cohort, etc.)? What ways might you want to connect, and why?
- Guests: NPTS students
- Post-class activity (due 11/15): Choose one way of the following ways to connect more deeply with the NPTS learning community: join a weekly community worship service (and, if in person, dinner); meet with classmates for shared or parallel study/work; meet with classmates social or for spiritual encouragement; commit to texting or calling a classmate daily for the two week period to encourage and pray for each other.



Nov 9 | Integrating Study & Devotion

- Pre-class reflection (due 11/8): Part 1: Reflect on your experience connecting with your professor. What were its challenges and benefits? Part 2: Reflect on your integration of study and worship across this semester. As you study Scripture with critical methods, where have you found this integration challenging, and where have you found this integration life-giving? Have you experienced your study as an act of worship? Have you experienced a deepening of your devotion through it?
- Class guests: Max Lee, Sophia Magallanes-Tsang, Nathan Clayton
- Post-class activity (reflection due 11/22): Experiment with one of the integrative practices suggested by our Bible faculty.

Nov 16 | Imposter Syndrome (and a little rest)

- Part 1: Reflect on your experience in community (Nov 2 class). What impact did you notice? What role do you want the NPTS learning community to have in your learning and formation as you go through your program? Part 2: To what extent have you experienced “imposter syndrome” during this first semester in seminary? Are there any ways this is shaping your actions and inactions / engagement in class or lack of engagement?

Nov 23 | Finishing Well: Preparing for Finals

- Pre-class reflection (due 11/22): Part 1: Reflect on your experience with the integrative practices you explored over the past week (from Nov 9 class). How will you avoid the compartmentalization of information and formation across your seminary journey? Part 2: Map final course assignments on to your calendar. What is your practical plan (focused work times with clear, sub-goals)? Your self-care plan? What does finishing well look like? What obstacles do you anticipate, and what strategies will you pursue to address them? *How can you finish the semester with integrity and peace?*

Nov 30 | Vocation and Integration Redux

- Pre-class reflection (due 11/29): Reread your course reflections from the past weeks. How have you grown as an integrated seminarian this semester? Is there any way your understanding of vocation has evolved? What habit, practice, and/or resource do you want to carry forward into next semester?
- Post-class activity (due 12/6): Prepare to present a five-minute summary of your flourishing plan in next week’s class. Come prepared as well to offer feedback on your classmates’ plans and to send them with a word of challenge, encouragement, and affirmation.

Dec 7 | Sharing Flourishing Plans, Closing Encouragements

- Pre-class activity (due 12/6): Prepare to present a five-minute summary of your flourishing plan in next week’s class. Come prepared as well to offer feedback on your classmates’ plans and to send them with a word of challenge, encouragement, and affirmation.
- Post-class activity (due 12/11): Submit final Flourishing Plan.