

Summer Term 2026

The Art of Reflective Ministry

Course Syllabus

Course Code: A01EY3

Canterbury College Land Acknowledgment

We respectfully acknowledge that Canterbury College resides on the traditional territory of the Three Fires Confederacy of First Nations, which includes the Ojibwa, the Odawa, and the Potawatomie.

Course Dates: June 1, 8, 15, 22, 29, July 6

Time: Mondays 6-9pm EST

Delivery: Online

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Course Description

This course explores the concepts associated with theological reflection or reflective belief while developing the learner's practice individually and in a group setting. Learners will engage with five different perspectives (hermeneutical spiral) which influence opinion, behaviour and personal theology, exploring how meaning is made for people of faith in everyday life. Learners will practice reflecting on everyday ministry/care situations, using questioning, problem solving, and critical thinking. At the heart of our learning is the understanding that the task of ministry must be undergirded by critical thinking, self awareness, and self-reflection. Such an approach centers our common humanity and the relationships we share with one another, ourselves, and God. Learners will gain extensive practice reflecting theologically on common questions, occurrences, problems, and scenarios, through accessing five distinct perspectives on the hermeneutical spiral: doctrine/the Church, personal experience, culture (voices from marginalized communities), scripture, and the life and ministry of Jesus.

Note: this course is taught from a Christian perspective but belief is not a prerequisite for taking the course. The skills taught and the experience gained in this course are transferable outside the realm of the Christian tradition.

Key concepts: theological reflection, theology, critical thinking, praxis, hermeneutical spiral, worldview, social justice, reflective belief, decolonization, coloniality

Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes

At the end of this course, students will:

- Be familiar with the practice of theological reflection as it pertains to life and ministry
- Be able to reflect theologically on aspects of their life/ministry, individually and in a small group setting, using a modified hermeneutical spiral, to develop “conversation” between the following perspectives:
 - Personal experience
 - Scripture
 - Doctrine / the Church
 - Culture (the experience of global & marginalized voices)
 - The life and ministry of Jesus Christand be able to communicate those reflections in written and oral form
- Understand how the practice of theological reflection creates opportunity for deeper understanding of the meaning behind what happens in one’s own ministry
- Understand how theological reflection on the learner’s own practice of ministry incorporates critical thinking, self reflection, self awareness and praxis (action)
- Develop active listening skills and learn to pose reflective questions concerning the meaning of another’s lived experience
- Using the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, understand the central importance of social justice and decolonization in ministry and theological reflection
- Understand that the process of theological reflection is incomplete without praxis

Required Texts / Study Documents

The principal Texts/Documents/Resources for this course will be (this list is subject to slight changes and will be made available to all students in advance of the course date):

The Bible

Ammerman, Nancy T., “2013 Paul Henry Furley Lecture: Finding Religion in Everyday Life” (*Sociology of Religion*)**

Baldelomar, Cesar (CJ), “Potential Responses to the Coloniality of Human Rights and “Man” in Light of Animal Rights Talk: To Imagine What Never Was” (*Liberatio*)**

Ballard, Paul, “The Bible in Theological Reflection: Indications from the History of Scripture” (*EquinoxOnline*)**

Bechtel, Trevor, Matthew Eaton, & Timothy Harvie, *Encountering Earth: Thinking Theologically with a More-Than-Human World*** (selections)

Cameron, Helen, “The visit: a theological reflection on a justice-seeking practice addressing a wicked problem” (*Practical Theology*)**

Friere, Paulo, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*** (selections)

Graham, Elaine, *St Andrew's Encyclopedia of Theology: Theological Reflection***

Kim-Cragg, HyeRan, "A Christian Feminist Theological Reflection on Economy of Life" (*The Ecumenical Review*, World Council of Churches)**

Kinast, Robert L., *Let Ministry Teach: A Guide to Theological Reflection* (selections)**

O'Neill, Gary and Liz Shercliff, *Straw for the Bricks: Theological Reflection in Practice* (selections)**

Xiong, Jianhui (Jane), Nazila Isgandarova, and Amy Elizabeth Panton, "COVID-19 Demands on Theological Reflection: Buddhist, Muslim, and Christian Perspectives on the Present Pandemic" (*De Gruyter*)**

Yih, Caroline, "Theological Reflection on silence and gender disenfranchisement" (*Practical Theology*)**

**These documents will be made available in electronic (pdf) format, free of cost, for all students in the course.

Full bibliography will be available one week prior to beginning of course.

Course Outline/Plan

Week 1: Introduction To Key Concepts & The Model

- What is theology?
- Introduction to the concept of theological reflection and reflective believing
- Introduction to hermeneutical spiral
- Understanding the role of the life and ministry of Jesus
- Assignment 1 – autoethnography (spiritual biography)

Week 2: Conversations Between Perspectives: Doctrine / The Church

- What do we mean by doctrine? How is it the same/different from the Church
- How do we use the teachings of the church to reflect on and find meaning in our life and ministry?
- How does doctrine / the Church impact the people we serve? How do we encounter the other when there is a difference in/absence of doctrine?
- Bring to class your tradition's statement of belief, affirmation, creed, or if you do not have one, is there a "rule" by which you live your life (golden rule, philosophy, etc)

Week 3: Conversations Between Perspectives: Scripture / the Bible

- Connecting scripture to experiences, the life of faith, and ministry
- How do we use the different parts of scripture – books of the law, prophets, gospels, parables, pericopes, wisdom literature, deuterio-canonicals, apocalyptic literature, lists/genealogies, etc. – to reflect theologically on life and ministry
- How does scripture shape the lives of the people we serve? How does it shape worldviews in this North American context?
- How can we reflect theologically on life and ministry using scripture?

Week 4: Conversations Between Perspectives: Personal Experience

- Connecting our lived experiences to our understanding of God and our ministry
- How does my experience of God in life impact my understanding of God and my faith?
- How does my experience of God flavour my ministry and impact my ability to theologically reflect on that ministry? How may potential differences or gaps between my lived experience and those of “the other” highlight the movement of the Divine in everyday life/ expose biases/worldviews I may hold?
- Outside of doctrine, worship, and practice, how do I encounter God in daily life, where do I see God, where do I question the existence of God, where does God feel absent?

Week 5: Conversations Between Perspectives: Culture

- Connecting the perspectives of different cultures, marginalized peoples, the “more than human,” in order to reflect more wholistically and with a decolonizing lens
- How do we decolonize our thinking and practice of theological reflection?
- How does theological reflection from the perspective of liberation theology, marginalized communities, and the “more than human” challenge and enhance our understanding of the other perspectives under consideration? Our understanding of God? Our understanding of ministry? Social justice and the Gospel?

Week 6: Summation: Thinking Critically, Putting Into Practice, Seeking Wisdom

- Connecting all the perspectives with praxis to theologically reflect on our practice of ministry
- Learner presentations: Choose a topic of significance in/to your life and ministry. Share your theological reflections, readings, and research on the topic, as well as how this process impacts your own personal theology and your ministry going forward. (more details in final syllabus)

Method of Evaluation and Criteria for Grading

(only for students choosing to be evaluated for full course credit) Details of assignments to be provided at least one week prior to start of classes and will contain full details of expectations.

Non-credit students are encouraged to write the course reflections as a learning and self-development tool. All of the below exercises will be completed by each student seeking evaluation for full certificate credit.

- Five (5) one page reflections on given topics (10% each): 50%
- In-class presentation: 20%
- Participation: 10%
- Self evaluation: 20%

Grade Descriptors

A+	90-100	One could scarcely expect better from a student at this level
A	80-89	Superior work which is clearly above average
B	70-79	Good work, meeting all requirements, and eminently satisfactory
C	60-69	Competent work, meeting requirements
D	50-59	Fair work, minimally acceptable
F	below 50	Fail

