



C44 Pastoral Counseling

Meets a requirement in the Western New York Ministry Training Program

(Photo courtesy NIMH)

10 weeks in the Spring Semester, January 14 – March 18, 2027

Class meets on Zoom 7:00 – 9:00 p.m. Eastern time Thursdays

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I. General Information

Course Description

Introduction to the role of counselor in Christian ministry: The Biblical basis, models, and methods of pastoral counseling in the context of pastoral responsibilities, the family, the local congregation, the body of Christ, and the larger community of people and ideas.

Attendance Expectation

Please prepare for and attend all class sessions. Class activities will be used to assess your participation grade. Missed class activities may not be done later for credit.

Course Objectives

Upon successfully completing this course, you should be able to

1. Explain and cogently discuss major Biblical passages and principles related to pastoral counseling.
2. Connect different pastoral counseling methods to the evidence, people, and ideas upon which they are based.
3. Identify the kinds of problems and goals that are likely to bring people to seek the counsel of a pastor.
4. Identify and evaluate the range of resources available to help people who need counsel, especially the resources that are provided especially in Christian faith
5. Assess the temperament, knowledge, skills, and abilities that you bring to pastoral counseling, and identify ways to improve your preparation to counsel.
6. Outline a treatment plan for each of three different problems in the areas of belief, dependency, and family life.
7. Understand more of what it is to be fully human, connecting faith with counseling and with life.

II. Course Requirements

Reading for class preparation. Please read the assigned material *prior* to the class in which we discuss it. You should form *questions* from your reading to bring up for discussion in class.

Textbook:

Benner, David G. (2003, 2012). *Strategic Pastoral Counseling, 2e*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

Grading scale

A: 97 - 100, A-: 94 - 96, B+: 91 - 94, B: 88 - 90, B-: 85 - 87, C+: 81 - 84, C: 76 - 80, C-: 71 - 75, D: 68 - 70 F: 67 or below

Course schedule

Thursdays on Zoom 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM (EST)

- January 14
- January 21
- January 28
- February 4
- February 11
- February 18
- February 25
- March 4
- March 11
- March 18

Reading for class preparation. Read according to the calendar below. Please read the assigned material *prior* to the class in which we discuss it. You should form *questions* from your reading to bring up for discussion in class.

Week	To learn about	Readings	Activities
1	Pastoral counseling in ministry	Benner Chapter 1	Time worksheet
2	Biblical and psychological context of pastoral counseling	Benner Chapter 2	Co-ordinate Interviews of three people who do pastoral counseling
3	Models of pastoral counseling	Benner Chapter 3 Tim Keller article Ron Hawkins: Solution-Based Pastoral Counseling	Compare and contrast Benner and Hawkins
4	Real-world context: People's problems and goals	John Wesley and the role of suffering	Evaluate the fellowship of suffering in Philippians.
5	Stages and tasks of counseling	Benner Chapter 4	Outline the stages and tasks

6	The person of the pastoral counselor	Erikson's Stages of Psychosocial Development	Take the MEPSI Score the MEPSI using the guidelines on page 3 of this document .
7	Psychological resources	Download and read any 5 of the DSM-5TR Fact Sheets Cognitive Behavior Therapy	Take the Big Five personality test. Complete and score the Attribution Questionnaire using the separate handout.
8	Ethical Considerations	Benner Appendix AAPC/ACPE Code of Ethics	Connect the ethics of pastoral counseling with the ethics of pastoral ministry.
9	Identifying resources	Benner chapter 5	What resources are being used in this case in Benner?
10	Laying plans for counseling: What will you do?	Benner chapter 6	Eliza, the computer therapist and chat-bot counselors like this one .

Explanation of Assignments

<i>Assignment Summary.</i> See details below table.	Date	% of grade
1. <u>Prepare</u>: Read the textbook and write notes.	Pework and weekly	10
2. <u>Participate</u>: Contribute to class discussions	Regularly	10
3. <u>Think & act</u>: Quizzes, class activities, projects	Weekly	15
4. <u>Assess your learning</u>: Nine 2-3-page writing projects	Preparatory, weekly, and post-course	45
5. <u>Apply your skills</u>: Research and write three case studies and corresponding treatment plans	Post-course	20

Details about the assigned work:

1. Prepare: Read and write notes on each of the chapters in Benner. You should complete your reading and notes for each chapter *before* the class session that covers that chapter.

Organize your notes in an outline of the chapter. Include key terms and define them *in your own words*—do not cut and paste definitions from the book or any other source. For each chapter, evaluate three ways that the information or ideas connect with your actual or planned ministry.

Prepare comments or questions that you may bring up during class sessions, as part of your participation.

2. Participate. In addition to attending every class session, you should participate in the course in the following ways:

Contribute to class discussions using your reading of the textbook or other reading. Raise questions and ask for clarification of confusing material. Do some additional research on a textbook topic and share what you have learned with the class. You may do any of these in class discussion.

3. Think and act. Complete quizzes, small group activities, and demonstrations. These activities will be part of class activities or will be assigned online. Expect at least one of these activities weekly.

4. Write two or three pages (12-point Times New Roman font, 1" margins all around, double-spaced) on each of the following items. For some of the assignments, you may prefer to communicate using a method other than writing. If you do, please talk with the instructor ahead of time. Assignment 1 is preparatory and is due by the first class session. Assignments 2 through 8 are due in the corresponding week (assignment 2 is due by the end of week 2, assignment 3 by the end of week 3, and so on).

1. (Preparatory assignment): Prepare a list of the kinds of problems you are likely to face as a pastoral counselor. Use your knowledge of people and consult others to identify issues to add to your list. What problems that people have would you not think would be best taken to a pastoral counselor?

2. Counseling in the Bible: using a concordance and a search engine online, find passages in the Bible that deal specifically with counseling or the role of the counselor. Use other related keywords in your search. Can you find stories in the Bible that include some form of counseling?

3. Book reflection: Choose one of the books in the *Additional reading* list below. Write a review. Identify at least three concepts or ideas that you think are insightful or helpful, or that provoked you to think further. Explain how each concept is relevant to you as a pastoral counselor and discuss how you might apply it in your ministry.

4. Prepare an annotated list of people resources that might help you with pastoral counseling issues. Consider your personal contacts, local church, community, and the larger church.

5. Interview reports: Interview a solo pastor, a pastor in a multiple-staff church, and a retired pastor about their experience with pastoral counseling. What is their philosophy of pastoral counseling? Where does it fit in their view of ministry? How do they manage counseling within the time demands of ministry? What advice do they offer you about your future as a pastoral counselor? **Note:** We will share in class the people you would like to interview. If more than one student wants to interview the same person, please arrange for a group interview, to respect the pastors' time.

6. Mock counseling session report. Invite a trusted friend, relative, or classmate to role-play a person in an initial counseling session with you as the counselor. The person you invite should not be struggling with the issue that is addressed in the mock counseling session. Write a report on your experience in the session. Show how you used particular skills and techniques that you learned in this course. Describe aspects of the experience that you found enjoyable and any that were difficult or that helped you identify areas for growth as a counselor.

7. Assess your potential as a pastoral counselor. Use the assessments that we cover in the course: your genogram, your beliefs about change, your affective skills, your life experiences, and the results of the Big5, MEPSI, and Attribution style assessments. Add other resources you bring to pastoral counseling, like your emotional intelligence and your will to help and to persevere. What areas of growth will you need to pursue? What issues in pastoral counseling will you find most difficult to approach?

8. Annotate a referral list of pastors and other professionals to whom you could send a person whom you are unable to help. Perhaps the need is outside your range of expertise, you lack sufficient time, or you suspect that the problem is larger than the person is willing to share with you. Organize the list around the reasons that you might choose to refer a person and add notes to make the list useful to you in the future.

9. Share your thoughts and beliefs about the usefulness in general of pastoral counseling and your planned usage. How will you grow?

5. (Post-course assignment) Prepare three hypothetical case studies and corresponding treatment plans, one in each of the areas of belief, dependency, and family life. Prepare each using one of the models you learned in the course. Show how you could employ your personal experiences and abilities along with the skills and techniques of pastoral counseling.

Additional reading options:

Berne, Eric (1965). *Games People Play: The Basic Handbook of Transactional Analysis*. New York: Grove Press.

Bonhoeffer, Dietrich (1939/1978). *Life Together: A Discussion of Christian Fellowship*. San Francisco: HarperOne.

Buchanan, Duncan (1985). *The Counseling of Jesus*. London: Hodder & Stoughton.

Clinebell, Howard (2011). *Basic Types of Pastoral Care and Counseling: Resources for the Ministry of Healing and Growth*, 3rd ed. Nashville: Abingdon.

Collins, Gary (2007). *Christian Counseling*, 3rd ed. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Crabb, Larry (1975). *Basic Principles of Biblical Counseling*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

Floyd, Scott (2008). *Crisis Counseling: A Guide for Pastors and Professionals*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kegel.

Kemp, Charles (1985). *The Caring Pastor: An Introduction to Pastoral Counseling in the Local Church*. Nashville: Abingdon.

Kollar, Charles (2011). *Solution-Focused Pastoral Counseling: An Effective Short-Term Approach for Getting People Back on Track*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Nouwen, Henri (1994). *The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Society*. New York: Image Books.

Tournier, Paul (1954). *The meaning of Persons*. New York: Harper.

Townsend, Loren (2009). *Introduction to Pastoral Counseling*. Nashville: Abingdon.

Wimberley, Edward P. (1994). *Using Scripture in Pastoral Counseling*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.

Yancey, Philip (1977). *Where is God When it Hurts?* Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

Plagiarism Statement

Students are expected to exhibit honesty and integrity in their personal, professional and academic life, and work. As Christians, we are called to a high standard of honesty.

Examples of plagiarism include (but are not limited to) the following:

- Copying all or part of a theme, exam, paper, reading report, or other written work from another person;
- Submitting as one's own work that which was wholly or partially done by another;
- Quoting material from any source without clearly indicating it is someone else's work;
- Summarizing or paraphrasing from any source without clearly indicating it is someone else's work;
- Misrepresentation of documentation or resources
- Submitting workbook answers copied from another person or working in a group and submitting an identical set of answers for each member of the group without explicit permission from the professor;
- Cheating on a test by getting answers in an unauthorized manner;
- Submitting the same work for more than one course without the prior approval of the instructor.

An instance of plagiarism will result in an automatic "F" for the specific assignment and may also result in an automatic failure of the course.

Repeat offenses will result in an automatic failure of the course.

Due date policy: Life happens. If you find that you are unable to complete an assignment by the time it is due, please contact me. I will work with you to help you complete the course.