**IST 2107 - Ministry Praxis: Premarital Counseling & Weddings (Revised)**

Spring 2020 (Hybrid)

**INSTRUCTOR**:

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Office Hours: By Appointment

**GATHERING DAYS:** April 20 (Mon.), 1:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

A praxis course is designed to provide experiential education in the practices of ministry that Iliff students are likely to engage in their professional lives. It is an occasion to work on the integration of theology, theory, and practice in a specific area of ministry.

In this course, the ministry praxis is weddings and preparations for healthy & fulfilling marriages. It aims to encourage the students to reflect upon their theologies of marriage and engage in actual practices of ministry involved in accompanying persons making plans for marriage, such as meeting with the couple for marital preparation and coaching, facilitating family relationships, and planning and conducting wedding ceremonies, while honoring the ritual(s) of their traditions, theologies, and values.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

This course is designed to be a learner-centered course with each student responsible

for maximizing his/her own experience. The instructional responsibility is to create a welcoming

environment where sharing of different views, opinions, critiques, and expertise are valued and

respected. In order to allow the student to have embodied experiences with weddings and premarital counseling, various learning and teaching styles, including readings, class discussion, field research, and role play will be utilized. The students are expected to engage in the full range of learning styles to achieve the following goals:

1. To deepen the theological meaning of marriage.
2. To be confident in conducting various weddings.
3. To be competent to provide premarital counseling.

**DEGREE LEARNING GOALS:**

Theology and Religious Practices (PR): engage in analysis of contemporary religious traditions and institutions in order to assess, design, and perform meaningful leadership practices with sensitivity to contextual realities and relationship (*Master’s Student Handbook)*.

**REQUIRED TEXTS** (All books are available at the library):

1. Long, Kimberly (2016). *From This Day Forward: Rethinking the Christian Wedding.* Westminster John Knox Press. ISBN: 0664239307.
2. McFarlane, D.M (2007). *Weddings with Today's Families in Mind: A Handbook for Pastors*. Pilgrim Press. ISBN: 0829817379.
3. Your denominational or religious resources for marriage and weddings, if applicable (e.g., Book of Worship, Book of Common Prayer, etc.).
4. Prepare/Enrich, “Couples Workbook” (available on Canvas).
5. Taylor, Charles W. (1999). *Premarital Guidance: Creative Pastoral Care and Counseling Series*. Fortress Press. ISBN: 0800627121.

**RECOMMENDED TEXTS** (All books are available at the library):

1. Long & Maxwell (2015). *Inclusive Marriage Services: A Wedding Sourcebook.* Westminster John Knox Press. ISBN: 0664260314.

**SUGGESTED** **TEXTS** (All books are available at the library):

1. Troeger, Thomas (1990). *Imagining A Sermon*. Abingdon Press. ISBN: 0687186943. Pp. 39-49 (available on Canvas).
2. John Witte, Jr. (2012). *From Sacrament to Contract, Second Edition: Marriage, Religion, and Law in the Western Tradition*. Westminster John Knox Press. ISBN: 0664234321.

**REQUIREMENTS:**

1. **Participation**: The regular attendance of all online classes is required. You are required to read the assigned readings and post your assignments in a timely manner. All the assignments will be posted on the Discussions page, so that you may learn from other classmates’ writings by reading and replying to them. When replying, you are free to reply in one word or one sentence. But, you are required to respond to at least three classmates’ posts with your profound comments in **no less than 100 words**. Please make sure that all students have replies before commenting on posts that already have replies. You do not have to reply to late posts.

The instructor will provide her comments on the students’ assignments by replying to the posts on the Discussions page within a week, and you are supposed to read her replies to other students’ posts, as well as your own, as learning opportunities.

The instructor should be informed in advance of any necessary absences or delays of posting assignments. If you are not able to attend the Gathering Days class, you cannot pass the course, except the case that you get approval from your advisor and Dean’s office (due to the COVID -19 crisis, the Gathering Days class will be offered via Zoom). If you cannot participate in weekly discussions for two weeks, you cannot pass the course.

1. **Two One-page Essays** (single-spaced, 12-point, or 400-450 words/each) and **critical and constructive comments** (at least 100 words/each) on at least 3 classmates’ essays **(Weeks 1 & 2)**. Essays should include appropriate footnotes or the list of works cited with page numbers, if necessary.
2. **Interview Professional/Practitioner (Week 2)**: Interview an experienced practitioner or professional who has done multiple weddings. Ask about his/her experience and process of premarital counseling and conducting weddings. Your interview can be done in person, video, or phone. (Note: The instructor for this course is not eligible for this interview).

**If you are stumped about how to start this conversation, he**re are some of the kinds of questions you might ask of the person you are able to speak with:

* What are your practices or first steps when you get a request for a wedding? What is your entire process?
* What do you know now that you wished you had known when you first started presiding weddings?
* What is your goal and your concern in planning weddings? What are you trying to accomplish?
* How have your practices changed over time?
* What do you do when the family has very different theological understandings of marriage, weddings, and the wedding process from what you or your tradition would advocate?

After the interview, write your report (2-3 pages, double-spaced, 12-point, Times New Roman or 500-750 words) focusing on the following two questions, in addition to the summary of the interview process, and post it on Canvas by May 30 (Mon.), 11:59 p.m. (MT) and reply to at least three classmates’ posts by April 1 (Wed.), 11:59 p.m. (MT).

* What are the most profound learning points from this conversation?
* What did you hear that you did not expect?

1. **Make your own premarital counseling booklet (no less than 6 pages, single-spaced) or complete the online training of “Prepare/Enrich” and submit your facilitator certificate (Week 3)**: Please choose either A or B.
2. Research premarital counseling resources and make your own counseling booklet for five counseling sessions (1hour/each session). In addition to the general introduction to your counseling booklet including purposes of premarital counseling, your role and approach, and the design of the five sessions (1 page), you need to elaborate the following things in each session (1 page/each session):
3. The topic of the session
4. The goal of the session
5. A method of counseling (e.g., interviews, workbooks, questionnaires, etc.) and how it is going to be conducted.
6. You may enclose counseling materials for each session, such as a survey form or information sheets.

Post your premarital counseling booklet on Canvas by April 6 (Mon.), 11:59 p.m. (MT) and reply to at least three classmates’ posts by April 8 (Wed.), 11:59 p.m. (MT).

1. You will become a certified facilitator of Prepare/Enrich. The online training includes videos, training materials, and a facilitator manual. The materials are accessed at www.prepareenrich.com/training. You need to register the online training by paying $249.99. When you have completed the training, scan your facilitator certificate and email it to me by April 6 (Mon.), 11:59 p.m. (MT). In addition, you are required to reply to at least three classmates’ premarital counseling materials posted on Canvas by April 8 (Wed.), 11:59 p.m. (MT).
2. **Case Study for Wedding Praxis (Week 4)**: Explore and answer the questions included in the “Case Study for Wedding Praxis” paper and post it on Canvas by April 13 (Mon.), 11:59 p.m. (MT), and reply to at least three classmates’ posts by April 15 (Wed.), 11:59 p.m. (MT).

1. **A Group Project in the Gathering Days Class (Week 5)**: Due to the COVID-19 crisis, we are not able to meet on campus. Instead of group projects, we will discuss Requirement #7 (“An Annotated Wedding”) at the Zoom meeting.
2. **An Annotated Wedding (Week 4 & 5)**: Write an annotated wedding for a couple, real or imagined. You may choose one of the four wedding cases included in the “Case Studies for Wedding Praxis.” Each part of the wedding ceremony should provide detailed explanation, comment, or rationale. Please distinguish your annotated comments with a different color font or use the comment tool in Word or PDF. It should include:

* A brief description of the couple about to be married and current situations that may be relevant in designing the wedding.
* Your own theological understanding of marriage and your perspective of the purpose of the wedding for this specific couple (you may refer and cite to any readings, online and in-class discussions, interviews/observances, role playing, and premarital counseling resources).
* An order of service that includes an explanation about why you selected each part and why you placed it where you did within the service.
* A script of all words spoken, (e.g., prayers, readings, rituals, vows, etc.)
* A summary or outline of a sermon (a full sermon manuscript is optional). In order to learn how to craft a wedding sermon, you may refer to Thomas Troeger, *Imagining a Sermon* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), pp. 39-49.

You may use any prepared resources that you would like, including your denomination’s service book, wedding prayer books, etc. for the order and elements of the service. Please be sure that you cite the sources.

Post your work on Canvas by April 17 (Fri.), 11:59 p.m. (MT) and review other classmates’ posts before the Zoom meeting on April 22 (Mon.), 1:00 p.m. (MT).

1. **A Wedding Praxis Video (Week 5):** Since we cannot role-play weddings in the Gathering Days class, you are required to role-play a wedding (Requirement #7) in your local context:

* Recruit the wedding participants (the bride, the groom, etc.) from your family or church and officiate the wedding as you prepared for Requirement #7. You may revise it based on the class discussion via Zoom on Gathering Days.
* Videotape the wedding ceremony and post it on Canvas by April 24 (Fri.), 11:59 p.m. (MT).
* Review your video and write a self-evaluation (1-2 pages, single-spaced, or 500-750 words). When you write the self-evaluation, concentrate on what was strong and weak in substance and delivery and two or more goals to improve this wedding ceremony. Post your self-evaluation by April 24 (Fri.), 11:59 p.m. (MT).
* Watch other classmates’ videos and offer constructive comments on at least three of them by April 27 (Mon.), 11:59 p.m. (MT).

**COURSE EVALUATION:**

Students can take the course using their P/F option. In order to receive the grade of “P,” the students must complete the five requirements listed in the section of Requirements. The students who want to contract for a grade of P/F must email a note to the instructor by the **second week** of the course. For a letter grade, normal school grading system is used. In order to ensure accountability and fairness, the following grading system will be applied:

Requirement #2……………………..………….. 20% (10% x 2)

Requirement #3 …..…………………………......15%

Requirement #4………………………………….20%

Requirement #5………………………………….10%

Requirement #6.…………………………………5%

Requirement #7………………………………….15%

Requirement #8 ………………………………….15%

(Videotape: 10.5%; Self-evaluation: 3%; comments on other posts: 1.5%)

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Total 100%

The Iliff grading system is a five-letter system from A through F with pluses and minuses. In computing grade point average (GPAs), grades are assigned the following numerical values (*The Master’s Student Handbook*). Assignments will earn an A for *exceptional* quality; A- for very good quality; B+ when it *meets and fulfills* all of the minimum requirements of the assignment; B or B- when there *are minor to moderate* shortcomings; C or lower with *major shortcomings*:

A : 4.00 (100 − 96%)

A-: 3.75 (95 – 91%)

B+: 3.25 (90 – 86%)

B : 3.00 (85 – 81%)

B-: 2.75 (80 − 76%)

C+: 2.25 (75 – 71%)

C : 2.00 (70 – 66%)

\*Both unexcused and excused late submissions will result in lowering your grade (-1/each). Late submissions may not receive written comments from the instructor.

\*The deadline for late submissions is **April 27 (Mon.)**. All the assignments submitted late may be reviewed by the instructor after this date.

\*If you do not reply to at least three classmates’ posts, you will lower your grade (-0.5/each).

\*If you do not answer any questions in your written assignments, you will lower your grade.

\*The use of inclusive language is strongly urged in all discussions, sermons, writings, etc.

**Incomplete Policy:** Students are responsible for following the procedures outlined in the *Master’s Student Handbook.*

**ADA Policy:** Iliff engages in a collaborative effort with students with disabilities to reasonably accommodate student needs. Students are encouraged to contact their assigned advisor to initiate the process of requesting accommodations. The Advising Center can be contacted at advising@iliff.edu or by phone at 303.765.1146.

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

**Week 1** **(3/23 - 3/27): Theologies of Marriage and Weddings**

* Required readings: Long; your denominational or religious resources for marriage and weddings.
* Suggested readings: Witt, Jr.
* Assignments:

1. Getting Acquainted: Post your videotape that introduces yourself to us (e.g., your program at Iliff, denomination, ministerial setting, preaching experience, future plan after graduation, why taking this course, etc.) by Mon. (3/23), 11:59 p.m. (MT).
2. Questions about the Syllabus: If you have questions about the course syllabus, post them on the Discussions page by Mon. (3/23), 11:59 p.m. (MT).
3. After reflecting on this week’s readings and recollecting your direct or indirect experiences of marriage and weddings (you may also remember some movies and stories that deal with issues on marriage and weddings), write **One-page Essay 1** (single-spaced, 12-point, or 400-450 words/each), focusing on the following questions:
4. What is marriage for you?
5. What do you think is the purpose of a wedding?
6. How do the resources of your faith tradition speak to your theology of marriage?
7. What biblical passages or other literature represent your understanding of marriage?

Post your essay on Canvas by Mon. (3/23), 11:59 p.m. (MT), and respond to at least three classmates’ essays (no less than 100 words) by Wed. (3/25), 11:59 p.m.(MT). The essay should include appropriate footnotes or the list of works cited with page numbers if necessary.

**Week 2 (3/30 - 4/03): Wedding Preparation and Resources**

* Readings: McFarlane, Parts One and Two; your denominational worship book on marriage
* Assignments:

1. Post **Requirement #3** on Canvas by Mon. (3/30), 11:59 p.m. (MT) and respond to at least three classmates’ posts (no less than 100 words) by Wed. (4/01), 11:59 p.m.(MT).
2. **Research and learn about legal marriage requirements in your state (e.g., Colorado:** [https://www.theknot.com/content/colorado- - wedding planning-tips](https://www.theknot.com/content/colorado-wedding-planning-tips)).
3. **One-page Essay 2 (**single-spaced, 12-point, or 400-450 words/each): **Become familiar with** McFarlane’s book and **your denominational worship book on marriage and weddings (if your faith tradition does not have wedding resources, refer to other sources, such as internet, books, liturgies from other traditions, etc.) and answer the following questions:**
4. What is the process of marriage from the beginning to the end? What would be your role for each stage? What are your basic rules for the preparation for weddings?
5. What are your state’s legal marriage requirements and denominational policies on marriage?
6. What are the strengths and challenges of your denomination's wedding/marriage resources? Do you recommend any good resources for the preparation for weddings?

Post your essay on Canvas by Mon. (3/30), 11:59 p.m. (MT), and respond to at least three classmates’ essays (no less than 100 words) by Wed. (4/01), 11:59 p.m.(MT). The essay should include appropriate footnotes or the list of works cited with page numbers if necessary.

**Week 3** **(4/06 - 4/10): Premarital Counseling**

* Readings: Prepare Enrich, “Couples Workbook”; Taylor.
* Assignments:

1. Post **Requirement #4** on Canvas by Mon. (4/06), 11:59 p.m. (MT), and respond to at least three classmates’ posts (no less than 100 words) by Wed. (4/8), 11:59 p.m.(MT).

**Week 4 (4/13 – 4/17): Case Study for Wedding Praxis**

* Readings: McFarlane, Part Three; your denominational and religious resources for the wedding liturgy
* Recommended readings: Long and Maxwell
* Assignments:

1. Post **Requirement #5** on Canvas by Mon. (4/13), 11:59 p.m. (MT), and respond to at least three classmates’ posts (no less than 100 words) by Wed. (4/15), 11:59 p.m.(MT).
2. Post **Requirement #7** on Canvas by Fri. (4/17), 11:59 p.m. (MT), and review other classmates’ posts before the Zoom meeting on April 22 (Mon.), 1:00 p.m. (MT).

**Week 5 (4/20 – 4/24; Gathering Days - Mon. 4/20, 1:00-5:00): Wedding Praxis**

* Assignments:

1. **Requirement #6**: Prepare for the Zoom meeting. You are required to provide constructive comments on other classmates’ projects (Requirement #7).
2. **Requirement #8**: Post your wedding praxis video and self-evaluation by April 24 (Fri.), 11:59 p.m. (MT) and your comments on at least three other classmates’ videos by April 27 (Mon.), 11:59 p.m. (MT).