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REFORMED  THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY  
DISTANCE EDUCATION

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PASTORAL COUNSELING  
DR. ROD S. MAYS

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# Course Overview

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## Course Description:

OPT516 Pastoral Counseling, 3 hours  
Lecturing Professor and Professor of Record:  
Dr. Rod S. Mays

To provide an overview of current trends in counseling theory and practice and the role of counseling in public, private, and church settings. Basic counseling skills taught in this course include interviewing, assessment, and therapeutic listening in a laboratory situation. Application is made to premarital, family crisis, grief and substance abuse counseling, with emphasis on developing strategies and applying scriptural principles.

## Course Objectives:

To introduce the student to the subject of pastoral counseling with emphases on:

- Creating a philosophy of ministry
- The various sacred and secular views of counseling
- The importance of asking good questions and diligent data gathering
- Breaking the cycle of destructive behaviors (self-injury, addictions, and depression)
- Developing a biblical view of marriage, sexuality, and divorce
- Responding to conflicts and peacekeeping strategies
- The importance of church membership and ecclesiastical discipline

## Required Textbooks:

Holcomb, Justin S. and Lindsey A. Holcomb. *Rid of My Disgrace: Hope and Healing for Victims of Sexual Assault*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011.

Johnson, Eric L., ed. *Psychology and Christianity: Five Views*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2010.

Lane, Timothy S. and Paul D. Tripp. *How People Change*. Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2006.

Oliphint, K. Scott and Rod Mays. *Things That Cannot Be Shaken: Holding Fast to Your Faith in a Relativistic World*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008.

Tripp, Paul D. *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands: People in Need of Change Helping People in Need of Change*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2002.

[These books may also be available in ebook format through various retailers]

### *Online Student Handbook:*

The [Online Student Handbook](#) has been designed to assist you in successfully navigating the Distance Education experience, whether you are taking a single course or pursuing a certificate or degree program. In it you will find valuable information, step-by-step instructions, study helps, and essential forms to guide you through every aspect of your distance education opportunity from registration to graduation. Please use this resource as your first-stop reference manual.

### *Summary of Requirements:*

1. Listen to all recorded [Lectures](#)
2. Complete all [Readings](#)
3. Participate in [Forum Discussions](#) (with other students and the professor)
4. Take the [Midterm Exam](#)
5. Take the [Final Exam](#)
6. Submit Two [Case Studies](#)
7. Submit Two [My View of Counseling Papers](#)
8. Submit [Reading Report](#)
9. Submit [Mentor Report or Course Application Paper](#)

# Meet the Professor

## *Lecturing Professor and Professor of Record:*



**Dr. Rod S. Mays** has taught at RTS-Charlotte since 2006, where he teaches Pastoral Counseling and Pastoral Ministry. He also serves on the Advisory Board of the Institute for Reformed Campus Ministry at RTS. Rod has served in the Presbyterian Church in America for the past 37 years, having pastored three churches in WV, MS and SC. For the past 15 years he has served as the National Coordinator of Reformed University Ministries, the campus ministry of the Presbyterian Church in America. Rod studied at Covenant College, B.A., University of West Georgia, M.Ed., New Orleans Seminary, Luther Rice Seminary, D.Min., and Westminster Theological Seminary California, Diploma in Counseling and Preaching.

## *Selected Publications by Dr. Mays*

Rod is the co-author of, *Things that Cannot Be Shaken* (Crossway, 2008) and a contributor to *Christ Centered Biblical Counseling* (Harvest House, 2013)

# Grades

## *Forum Discussions (15%):*

The student is required to interact in two (2) forums:

1. Student-Professor Posts (15 total posts)
  - A. Personal Introduction Forum: The student is required to post a brief personal introduction to the professor/class. Suggested details include your vocation, where you live, your church background, why you chose RTS, and what you hope to gain through the course (1 required post).
  - B. 5 Topical Discussion Q&A Forums: The student is required to answer each topical discussion question with one (1) response. The professor will acknowledge the student's answer and will follow up with a subsequent question to which the student must also answer with one (1) response. Each topical discussion question, therefore, requires two (2) total posts/responses from the student (Total of 5 forums x 2 posts = 10 total posts).
  - C. Student-Professor Forum: The student is required to post four (4) times in this forum. Posts in this forum should focus on course-related content such as research paper topics, lectures and reading assignments, or other academic issues related to the course.
2. Student-Student Forum (5 total posts)

A post may be either a new topic or a response to an already existing topic.

## *Examinations (Midterm 15%, Final 15%):*

There are two examinations for this course. The midterm exam will cover all the lectures and readings from Lessons 1-6. The final exam will cover all the lectures and readings from Lessons 7-12. Both exams consist of five essay questions from the required reading and lectures. Use the Lesson Questions to assist you in your study.

The midterm and final exams for this course are to be taken online in the Learning Management System (LMS). Please note that you will need to have a proctor for your exams. Your proctor can be anyone except a relative or current RTS Student. After clicking on the exam link you will be given detailed instructions about the exam. Please read these instructions carefully before entering the exam.

## *Case Studies (30%):*

The student will read and respond to two case studies, each one worth 15%, as found in Lessons 5 and 10. Each response to the case study should be a minimum of five pages (max of 8) and interact in a thoughtful, in-depth, and practical method offering up a recommended course of action with the questions supplied at the end of the case study. The report should be written in paragraph style following Turabian style formatting.

### *My View of Counseling (10%):*

The student will submit two papers, each one is worth 5% , titled “My View of Counseling” worth 5% each. The first paper will be submitted at the beginning of the course, and the second at the conclusion of the course. Each paper should be 2-4 pages in length and include an honest assessment of their current view of counseling and the role it plays in pastoral and church ministry See section titled “[My View of Counseling Papers](#)” in this syllabus.

### *Reading Report (10%):*

The student must complete all of the required reading. Reading assignments are broken down week by week within the LMS. The Reading Report will indicate the amount of required reading that has been completed during the semester and must be filled out and submitted at the end of the course.

### *Mentor Report OR Course Application Paper (5%):*

If you are enrolled in an **RTS Global** degree program, you are required to submit a mentor report at the end of the course. Every portion of the form (goals, summaries, assessments, and signatures) should be filled out completely by both the student and the mentor to receive full credit. You can download the Mentor Report form in your Canvas classroom.

If you are receiving your degree through another **RTS campus** (Orlando, Jackson, Charlotte, et. al.), or are a certificate student, or special student (e.g. from another seminary), you are asked to write a 200-word summary of how you perceive what you have learned in this course will fit into the objectives you have for your ministry, your educational goals, or other objectives you wish to achieve in life. Course Application Papers (CAP) that fall well-short of 200 words will receive a grade deduction.

### *Assignments:*

Best practice for your time management is for you to submit all assignments at the end of the week in which they fall, using the upload links provided in the LMS. All work must be submitted by midnight of the course end date, per your course start letter. You are responsible for turning in all assignments on time; no late submissions are permitted. Any student who needs an extension must get approval from the Registrar prior to that time.

### *Contact Information:*

Reformed Theological Seminary, Distance Education  
2101 Carmel Road  
Charlotte, NC 28226  
(704) 900-1257  
1-855-854-6920  
FAX: (704) 366-9295  
E-mail: [dess@rts.edu](mailto:dess@rts.edu)  
Web site: [www.rts.edu/global](http://www.rts.edu/global)



# Lessons

## Lesson One

Developing a Philosophy of Ministry

## Lesson Two

Philosophy of Pastoral Counseling

## Lesson Three

Systematic Theology and Counseling

## Lesson Four

Theories of Counseling

## Lesson Five

A Case Study on Marriage

## Lesson Six

Data Gathering and Homework

## Lesson Seven

Breaking the Cycle of Cyclical Behaviors

## Lesson Eight

Relational Issues

## Lesson Nine

Mediation and Peacemaking

## Lesson Ten

A Case Study on Mediation and Peacemaking

## Lesson Eleven

Addictions, Sexuality, and Depression

## Lesson Twelve

Church Discipline and Diaconal Ministry



# My View of Counseling Papers

The student will submit two papers titled “My View of Counseling” worth 5% each. The first paper will be submitted at the beginning of the course, and the second at the conclusion of the course. Each paper should be 2-4 pages in length and include an honest assessment of their current view of counseling and the role it plays in pastoral and church ministry.

The **first paper** should address issues related to:

- The importance of counseling in a ministry setting
- The role the pastor or church leader has in counseling
- The method or mode of counseling that the student would employ

The **second paper** should address issues related to:

- How the individual student's view of counseling has changed since taking the course
- Which method the student would now employ in counseling (and why)
- The role the pastor or church leader has in counseling
- The importance of developing a philosophy of ministry

**Course Objectives Related to Student Learning Outcomes**

Course: Pastoral Counseling  
Professor: Rod S. Mays

<b>Student Learning Outcomes</b>		<b>Rubric</b>	<b>Mini-Justification</b>
<i>In order to measure the success of the MAR curriculum, RTS has defined the following as the intended outcomes of the student learning process. Each course contributes to these overall outcomes. This rubric shows the contribution of this course to the outcomes.</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Strong</li> <li>➤ Moderate</li> <li>➤ Minimal</li> <li>➤ None</li> </ul>	
<b>Articulation (oral &amp; written)</b>	Broadly understands and articulates knowledge, both oral and written, of essential biblical, theological, historical, and cultural/global information, including details, concepts, and frameworks.	Strong	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Emphasis placed on using scripture truths to evaluate and analyze counseling scenarios in written form.</li> <li>- Focus on various counseling views (both sacred and secular) and their strengths and weaknesses in counseling situations.</li> </ul>
<b>Scripture</b>	Significant knowledge of the original meaning of Scripture. Also, the concepts for and skill to research further into the original meaning of Scripture and to apply Scripture to a variety of modern circumstances. (Includes appropriate use of original languages and hermeneutics; and integrates theological, historical, and cultural/global perspectives.)	Minimal	Scripture (original languages not used) applied to counseling scenarios
<b>Reformed Theology</b>	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	Strong	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reformed theology used to frame the issues of sin and rebellion against God</li> <li>- Westminster Confession of Faith used as the foundation for defining marriage and divorce</li> <li>- PCA membership vows discussed in relation to the importance of church membership and church discipline</li> </ul>
<b>Sanctification</b>	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification.	Strong	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Emphasis placed on directing students to daily read scripture and maintain good spiritual disciplines</li> <li>- Focus on challenging people with the story of redemption and having them get caught up in a story that is bigger than their own</li> </ul>
<b>Desire for Worldview</b>	Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God.	Moderate	Focus on personal problems and sin issues being conformed and redeemed by God's word.
<b>Winsomely Reformed</b>	Embraces a winsomely Reformed ethos. (Includes an appropriate ecumenical spirit with other Christians, especially Evangelicals; a concern to present the Gospel in a God-honoring manner to non-Christians; and a truth-in-love attitude in disagreements.)	Strong	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Survey and analysis of sacred and secular approaches to counseling, with positives and negatives of each view provided</li> <li>- Consideration is given to conflict resolution, peacemaking, and mediation</li> </ul>
<b>Teach</b>	Ability to teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.	Strong	Applications and direction are given on how to teach and counsel from scripture that will transform lives and lead individuals to a deeper understanding of scripture
<b>Church/World</b>	Ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues.	Moderate	Students are introduced to personal and public issues that impact all denominations and the worldwide church
<b>MAR Specific SLO</b>	An ability to integrate such knowledge and understanding into one's own calling in society	Moderate	Students are encouraged to consider their calling for ministry in light of their own views on counseling