

Spring 2009

Reformed Theological Seminary: Course # 6PT516: Pastoral Counseling

Course Purpose / description:

This course is an introduction to the counseling process with an emphasis on counseling from a Christian perspective in a pastoral context. The course will include discussions regarding; the nature of people and problems, the nature of change, definitions of health and maturity, the various models of counseling, the phases of counseling, and the role of client and counselor. In addition, material concerning marital counseling, family counseling, and lay counseling in the context of the church or para church ministry will be presented. Finally, specific content regarding counseling with those struggling with anxiety, depression, sexual brokenness and addictions, trauma and betrayal, and suicidal urges will be included. Primary skills addressed in the course include; approaching the Scriptures to find a framework for understanding and helping people, self-examination, listening, assessment, feedback and processing. Participants should find that they understand their own theology of relationships and change better, and should feel exposed to at least one model of Christian or "Biblical" counseling. These gains should allow a participant to more adequately function as a lay counselor and as a referral agent in the ministry.

Required reading:

Crabb, Lawrence J. Understanding People. Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 1987.

Yalom, Irwin. Love's Executioner. Basic Books, New York, 1989.

Recommended reading:

Trip, Paul. Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands. P&R Publishing, ISBN#0-87552-607-1

Jones, Stanton L. and Butman, Richard E. Modern Psychotherapies. IVP, Downers Grove, IL. 1991

Schedule (tentative)

1. 2/4/09
 - a. The goal of counseling,
 - b. Models of counseling and change,
 - c. Therapy and theology.
2. 2/11/09
 - a. Basic dimensions of human nature
3. 2/18/09
 - a. The role of environment and development (our story) in the change / growth (or lack thereof) process.
 - b. The role of sexual environment in particular
 - c. Human needs, drives, longings, instincts...
4. 2/25/09
 - a. The impact of trauma, loss, betrayal and neglect in the formation of personality, relational style and direction in life.
5. 3/4/09
 - a. Cases illustrating these theories, how counseling helped.
6. 3/11/09
 - a. Phase one: Assessment, organization, listening, empathy.
7. 3/18/09
 - a. Phase two: "tinkering," experimentation, processing, homework, advanced empathy.
8. 3/25/09
 - a. Marriage, family and gender, with counseling implications.
9. 4/1/09
 - a. Sexual addictions and sexual brokenness, with counseling implications.
10. 4/15/09
 - a. Conflict, exposure, resistance and repentance, with counseling implications.
11. 4/22/09
 - a. Case presentations.
 - b. Case study supervision model.
12. 4/29/09
 - a. Major change, turning points, conversions and calling, with counseling implications.
13. 5/6/09
 - a. Counseling families, adolescents, kids...
14. 5/13/09
 - a. Terminating counseling, celebrating a shared experience.
15. 5/20/09
 - a. Discussing implications for the church, ministry models, discussion of recovery programs, small groups, lay counseling, etc.