



Master of Arts in Religious Leadership (MARL) COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

The Master of Arts in Religious Leadership core courses are listed below based on area of study – Biblical Studies (BS), Christian Ministry (CM), Historical Studies (HS), and Theology, Religion, and Ethics (TRE). The specialization courses are listed based on area of specialization – Church and Administration (CA), Christian Education (CE), Social Justice Ministries (SJM), and Worship and Liturgy (WL).

Prerequisites - Some courses require a certain degree of prior knowledge or competence called a prerequisite.

Area I: Biblical Studies

(TBD, Chair)

BS 413 Survey of the Old and New Testament

3 Credits. Required.

This survey course is designed to lay a foundational understanding of Scripture via a historical survey of the Old and New Testaments. The course will cover issues that interact with biblical literature, basic hermeneutical principles, key themes and persons of the canon, and the redemptive theme of Scripture.

BS 570 Cultural Hermeneutics

3 Credits. Required. Prerequisites: BS 413.

This course explores the cultural backgrounds and perspectives of interpreters and their conclusions regarding New Testament materials. The ideology of traditional “Eurocentric” New Testament interpretations are considered alongside that of Latin American, African American, African, Asian, Feminist and Womanist interpreters. The goal of this study is to help students to develop their own interpretive and theological voices.

Area II: Christian Ministry

(Dr. Betty Holley, Chair)

CM 400 A Introduction to Theological Research and Writing

3 Credits. Required.

This course offers a detailed, hands-on overview of the academic writing process, focused on effective methods for locating authoritative sources on selected topics; summarizing, paraphrasing, and quoting material from sources into student papers while avoiding plagiarism; appropriately acknowledge authorship of material from other sources; review of grammar to include the mechanics involved in academic writing; and in general, conforming to prevailing standards of acceptability for written work submitted for publication, presentation at academic meetings or fulfillment of course credit and graduation requirements.

CM 450 Spiritual Formation

3 Credits.

This course is designed to engage participants in an exploration and expansion of their inner spiritual life utilizing the spiritual disciplines. Personal transformation is an internal process that occurs as the individual allows God access to the whole of one's being and life. The course combines: 1) Personal encounter with God; 2) Keeping a spiritual journal as a record of the activity of God in one's life; 3) Corporate sharing of one's experience with God; 4) Select a book from the bibliography that is relevant to one's spiritual development and formation. 5) Write a 5-page paper on the book and one's interaction with it. Biblical and theological reflection on key issues that arise in the life of one who seriously engages in the spiritual disciplines.

CM 603 Ministerial Sexual Ethics: Healthy Boundaries

3 Credits. Required.

This course addresses the matter of clergy misconduct. Sexual abuse in the ministerial relationship can become a serious dilemma within the congregation. Persons studying for entry into various ministries are challenged to examine the issues pertaining to clergy sexual misconduct, to examine their own values and to begin to develop their own policies for use with a potential congregation.

Area III: Historical Studies

(Dr. Roger Evans, Chair)

HS 680 African American Christianity

3 Credits.

This course is designed to explore the people and events which shaped the African American religious experience and how the African American church helped shape the political, economic and cultural America. We will examine the African American church's

response to issues such as slavery, the anti-slavery movement, the civil war, the reconstruction era, the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s, liberation theology, and the current ecumenical movement. We will look at both primary sources and the writings of African American scholars and historians who have written about the involvement of the Black church in these areas.

Area IV: Theology, Religion, and Ethics

(Dr. Charles Brown, Chair)

TRE 405 Introduction to Liberation Theologies

3 Credits. Required.

An examination of Christian theology as it finds contemporary expression in the liberation theologies of North America, Asia, Africa, and Latin America. The birth of liberation theological movements in the latter part of the 20th century is viewed against the background of the Enlightenment and the emergence of orthodox, liberal and neo-orthodox theologies. Students have the opportunity to clarify their own theological stance by engaging theological perspectives that are radically different from their own.

TRE 501 Introduction to Christian Ethics

3 Credits. Required. Prerequisites: BS 413 and TRE 405

An exploration of theory and method in Christian ethics emphasizing experience and reflection as elements of moral life.

TRE 510 African American Religious Experience

3 Credits. Required. Prerequisite: TRE 405.

This course focuses upon the development of the African American religious experience in the United States. Attention is given to the African heritage. The African American experience in Christianity, Islam and Judaism is explored. In each instance, concern is given to the efficacy of the experience for the adherents.

TRE 650 Transformational Theological Leadership

3 Credits.

This course is designed to uniquely challenge students' thinking about leadership and administration in the church. Students are afforded the opportunity to hear and interact with scholars whose work has contributed greatly to elements of church life. The course provides students opportunities to examine various aspects of literature pertaining to leadership and students engage in discussions to clarify their own positions pertaining to the concepts that undergird leadership and administration in the 21st century church.

Church and Administration Specialization

CA 480: Ministry Formation: Marketplace Ministry in the African American Context

3 Credits.

This course is designed to help students explore the various ways in which pastors and church leaders can access multiple sources of capital to fuel church growth and community revitalization. Students will examine biblical and other paradigms, strategies and practical applications to address the many issues facing local congregations primarily from an African-American perspective.

CA 520 Church Polity and Practice

3 Credits.

This study of the polity and practice of different denominations to prepare the student for informed and effective leadership at the local and connectional level.

CA 570 The Church in Its Urban Environment

3 Credits.

This course looks at the urban environment as a context for ministry. A general overview of the origin of the city and the city in history is presented. A theology and mission for the city will be examined as the basis for ministry in the city. Several approaches to urban ministry are discussed.

CA 575 Church Administration

3 Credits.

This course will help prepare future pastors and other church leaders for the ministry of church administration, particularly in the African American Church utilizing the governing framework of the local African Methodist Episcopal Church. Students from other faith communities will be assisted and encouraged to identify and relate management and administrative principles to their particular context.

CA 580 Rural and Small Church Ministry

3 Credits.

This course will explore the small churches which are prevalent and persistent in American religion. Over one-half of all Protestant congregations worship with fewer than 75 people on a Sunday, and about two-thirds worship with fewer than 100. Programmatic and bureaucratic norms are often in conflict with local folkways in small churches, putting assigned leaders in difficult situations. Church leaders called and sent to particular communities have the challenge of learning the stories of those places, dealing with changes, and finding ways to tell the story of the gospel in, with and under

the stories of people and place.

CA 600 Lay Ministry Seminar in Church and Administration

3 Credits.

Students specializing in this area of specialization, Church and Administration, are required to complete this capstone course during their final or graduating semester. A component of the capstone course is the completion of an integrative essay, 25 to 35 pages in length, integrating themes from the student's full course of study.

Christian Education Specialization

CE 510 Introduction to Christian Education

3 Credits.

This course is designed to introduce the student to the Christian educational task of the Church. It includes an examination of the biblical, theological, and social foundations pertinent to the ministry of Christian Education. Discussions of topics such as the basic components of the Christian education program, methodologies and techniques for implementation, curriculum selection and development, as well as program evaluation, characterize the class sessions.

CE 540 Teaching the Bible to Children and Adults

3 Credits.

This course equips students with the methodology to enable children and adults to experience the Bible as an intelligible, relevant, and powerful force in daily life. It examines how the Bible shapes personal faith and corporate life.

CE 544 Health Care: What Effective Clergy Must Know

3 Credits.

This course provides a foundation to understand and effectively address health care issues in the African American community. They come away with a deeper understanding of the depth of issues and the call to action now.

CE 550 Role of Technology in Religious Education

3 Credits.

Understanding the design, relevance, and application of technology in religious educations will be the focus of this course. Students will be introduced to creative techniques and reflective practices for the work of the 21st century church in a digital age.

CE 555 Youth Focused Christian Education

3 Credits.

Exploration of ways to engage and support youth in discerning and living out their Christian vocations in contemporary culture will be introduced. This course challenges students to engage in various approaches to Christian Education, critically and appreciatively, appropriate to their contexts.

CE 600 Lay Ministry Seminar in Christian Education

3 Credits.

Students specializing in this area of specialization, Christian Education, are required to complete this capstone course during their final or graduating semester. A component of the capstone course is the completion of an integrative essay, 25 to 35 pages in length, integrating themes from the student's full course of study.

Social Justice Ministries Specialization

SJM 440 Social Justice Leadership

3 Credits.

In this course, students will understand the pluralistic nature of institutions, society, and culture in the United States and across the world to become educated, productive, and principled citizens/leaders. The course is focused on all aspects of social identity, including but not limited to race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, socioeconomic status, and national origin. Exploration of topics of identity, social justice, and diversity through these various lenses will be discussed along with the impact these identities have on understanding the world.

SJM 515 The Religious and Moral Meanings of Black Protest

3 Credits. Prerequisite: TRE 405.

This course will explore theological, ethical and strategic aspects of the thought of selected African American theologians and protest leaders, with consideration of implications for contemporary issues facing African Americans.

SJM 560 Ecological Theology

3 Credits. Required.

Can the Christian tradition provide a rationale that will persuade human beings from destroying other species, their habitats and the greater biosphere of our planet? Widespread ecological degradation has prompted biblical scholars, systematic theologians and ethicists to explore ways of thinking about and acting more compatibly

within the community of diverse beings that constitute Earth. This course has been designed to bring students into this ongoing dialogue by examining systematically some notions in Christian texts and discerning the extent to which they provide promising foundations for ecological theology.

SJM 642 Introduction to Womanist and Feminist Theology

3 Credits. Prerequisites: TRE 405.

This course explores the origins, development, and major themes of Black and Womanist theologies as contemporary theological movements that emerged in the United States in the late 20th century. The major focus of the course is a critical examination of the mutual critique and dialogue between Black and Womanist theologies. Specific attention is given to how the issues of gender, race, and class inform the tensions between and the construction of each theological perspective. Tensions within Black and Womanist theologies are also addressed along with the way they have engaged, challenged, and been challenged by various theological perspectives in the United States, Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Students confront the question: What do both of these theologies have to say to each other about Christianity, culture, politics and social reality in today's world?

SJM 680 Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference

3 Credits.

Course will be centered around the annual theme of the Conference.

SJM 600 Lay Ministry Seminar in Social Justice Ministries

3 Credits.

Students specializing in this area of specialization, Social Justice Ministries, are required to complete this capstone course during their final or graduating semester. A component of the capstone course is the completion of an integrative essay, 25 to 35 pages in length, integrating themes from the student's full course of study.

Worship and Liturgy Specialization

WL 516 Music and Worship in the Black Church

3 Credits.

This course will examine the history and development of music and worship in the black church. Various genres of music (e.g. spirituals, hymns, and gospels) and various styles of worship will be covered as well as key issues, concerns, and challenges for the 21st century black church. Insight and analysis into contemporary gospel music, praise and worship music, and holy hip hop, along with providing directions and practical resources

for developing and planning worship in the black church will be explored.

WL 535 Global Perspectives in Christian Worship

3 Credits.

Examination of worship from various cultural perspectives; their similarities, differences, and how they can effectively enhance, enliven, and enrich each other will be the scope of this course. This course focuses on worship as a public ritual event, consisting of sung and spoken prayers, scriptural preaching, sacraments, and other ceremonies. Special attention will be given to intergenerational worship and the hip-hop generation.

WL 545 Liturgy, Spirituality, and Community Formation

3 Credits.

Through classroom liturgical experimentation and reflection, along with readings from historical and contemporary sources, students will develop tools for analyzing and promoting community formation in this course.

WL 555 Contemporary Christian Worship: Origins, Theory, and Practice

3 Credits.

This course examines the development of patterns and practices of worship in the contemporary western churches; the effects of technology, consumerism, individualism, globalism, the loss of cultural grand narratives, and entertainment of worship; the ramifications of cultural accommodation and resistance in liturgical practice.

WL 565 The History and Theology of Eucharistic Worship

3 Credits.

This course focuses on a liturgical and theological study of the origins and evolution of the Eucharist and related practices. Emphasis on major cultural, philosophical, and historical movements which formed the background of this evolution will be explored.

WL 600 Lay Ministry Seminar in Worship and Liturgy

3 Credits.

Students specializing in this area of specialization, Worship and Liturgy, are required to complete this capstone course during their final or graduating semester. A component of the capstone course is the completion of an integrative essay, 25 to 35 pages in length, integrating themes from the student's full course of study.