

Centre for Christian Studies

Theme Year Curriculum

Process Assumptions:

Each theme year includes:

- two learning circles (fall and spring)
- a field placement
- assignments
- mentoring
- learning partnerships
- external course(s)

Learning Circles

Each learning circle includes:

- community responsibilities such as worship preparation and leadership, community building
- field trips and guest resource persons
- student led and staff led sessions
- integrative work such as review of learnings, journaling/reflection and interviews with staff

Assignments following the learning circles normally include two major research papers, spiral reflections, verbatim reports and an integrative paper. Students are expected to bring case studies from their field placement to each learning circle. In the Pastoral Care year and in the educational Ministry Year, sermons are preached to staff and student colleagues at the spring learning circle.

Assignments

Each theme year will include the following assignments

- 2 Case Studies
- 2 Learning Circle Research Assignments
- 2 Theme Assignments
 - Pastoral Care Year: History of Pastoral Care and an Annotated Bibliography
 - Social Ministry Year: Gender Justice and an Annotated Bibliography
 - Educational Ministry Year: Denominational Study Documents and an Annotated Bibliography
- 2 Spiral Reflection Assignments

- 2 Verbatim Reports
- 1 Community Project
- Field Placement Mapping Project
- 1 Year-end Integrative Assignment
- 4 Field Placement Learning Logs

Field Education

In each of the three theme years students are involved in a field placement for an average of twelve hours a week from September through April. The field site, which is selected in consultation with staff and others in the student's local community, may be a congregation or an institution or agency. Students in the diploma program must do one of each in the course of their three theme years.

Other Assumptions:

Diversity

We believe that cultural diversity is a theological imperative for right relationship and justice. In each aspect of the program, we seek respectful ways to explore diversity and to model our commitment to it. Selected readings come from a variety of cultural sources; theological reflection and biblical interpretation consider the cultural contexts involved; resources and resource people are drawn from a variety of contexts; field trips and field placements stretch the students' awareness of, and respect for, diversity. Global connections and perspectives are encouraged wherever possible. The cultural diversity present in the CCS community is a resource for, and informs, learning about diversity.

During the Pastoral Care Year we specifically focus sessions on racial and ethnic diversity; family and partnership models; the needs of marginalized women, children and men; sexism; heterosexism; physical and intellectual ability/disability; pastoral care specific to particular stages in life; and, advocacy. Throughout the year we also explore culturally sensitive and respectful communication, and theological diversity.

During the Social Ministry Year, various aspects of diversity are explored with an emphasis on: working cross culturally, marginalization, exposure visits to community ministries and social agencies, racial and sexual justice, regional issues, and globalization. Students also become familiar with ecumenical partnerships and international diaconal organizations.

During the Education Year specific sessions focus on ecumenical and inter-faith awareness. There are also a number of sessions related to leadership with a variety of age groupings: children, youth, adults; as well there is focus on the dynamics of intergenerational worship and education.

Stewardship

As stewardship is an essential dimension of faithful discipleship, we are committed to addressing elements of stewardship throughout the program and encouraging a spirituality that embodies the principles of good stewardship. This holistic approach to stewardship begins with a conviction that life is a gift and includes theological reflection, biblical exploration, social analysis, and liturgical practice. Leadership skills and strategies are developed to enable the stewardship of the whole people of God. Throughout the program, field placements and mentoring relationships encourage self-reflection and consideration of lifestyles that are consistent with diaconal ministry.

In the Pastoral Care Year, stewardship is addressed through theology sessions exploring the concepts of stewardship, humanity, and our relationship with the rest of creation.

In the Social Ministry Year, skills are developed in social analysis and in understanding global and local economic trends, stewardship of the environment is explored, and theological themes of scarcity and abundance as well as reciprocity are examined. Throughout this year, the living out of a theology of justice is emphasized.

The Educational Ministry Year includes a focus on developing the talents and gifts of the laity. The worship component of the year examines practices of offering and Eucharist.

Pastoral Care Year Curriculum

Purpose:

- To develop an understanding of pastoral care as an essential part of the ministry of the faith community.
- To develop skills in offering appropriate pastoral care

Goals:

- To develop an understanding of the factors which contribute to pastoral identity and practice
- To develop an understanding of the theory and theology of pastoral care
- To explore concepts of power and vulnerability as they apply to pastoral care
- To understand and practice responsible pastoral ethics
- To develop basic skills in pastoral counseling
- To develop an understanding of the differences amongst pastoral care, pastoral counseling, spiritual direction, and social visiting
- To develop an analysis and understanding of diversity and its implications for pastoral care
- To experience offering pastoral care in a variety of contexts
- To encourage others to develop and offer their skills in pastoral care
- To learn how to respond effectively to some of the pastoral issues in various ministry settings

Theological Assumptions:

With its roots in the early Christian Church and in the covenantal commitment of the people of ancient Israel to care for the widows and the orphans, for the most vulnerable - the ministry of *diakonia* has always included a two-fold commitment of responding to immediate needs and of working to transform society so that all might live in right relationship, that all might experience abundant life.

As a theological school committed to upholding the ministry of *diakonia*, we seek to provide a solid foundation in the theory, theology, and practice of pastoral care.

Field Placement

The work of the field involves the student in working directly with people needing pastoral care and the placement offers a diversity of opportunities for learning specific pastoral skills and discerning how to respond pastorally to a variety of situations. In most situations,

students are expected to be involved in offering pastoral care related to grief and to offer leadership in at least one funeral.

Educational Ministry Year Curriculum

Purpose:

- To deepen understanding and appreciation for the ministries of education and worship
- To develop and enhance skills for educational and worship ministries

Goals:

- To explore the theory and practice of educational ministry including faith development, spiritual formation, and congregational empowerment
- To explore the theory and practice of worship including preaching, sacraments and spirituality
- To broaden our understanding of ecumenical and interfaith perspectives
- To continue to examine theological, biblical, stewardship, polity and diaconal formation topics

Theological Assumptions:

The people of God are called to seek wisdom and understanding for their ministries in the church and world. Educational ministry involves the exploration and critical examination of our faith traditions and heritage, as well as discernment of the movement of the Spirit in the present day. A diaconal vision of education highlights the process of empowerment whereby the church is engaged in the on-going responsibility of learning and identifying faithfulness.

The ministry of worship is a celebration of God's presence and a listening for revelation. It is an act of communal gathering that is intended to lead the church in its ministry of education and faith formation, of pastoral care, and of faithful action and service in the world.

Field Placement

In the Educational Ministry Year the placement will normally be in a congregational/parish setting. Students are expected to review their experience and skill level in educational and worship ministry and develop learning goals related to addressing gaps in experience or weaknesses in skills. The learning goals represent an opportunity to stretch and grow in significant ways during the field placement. For example, a student with a lot of experience in youth ministry might consider working on adult education skills during the field placement.

As part of the field placement, students are expected to preach at least twice and lead various components of worship on a frequent basis. Students should ensure they seek intentional feedback

and critique of aspects of their work related to their goals during the field placement.

Centre for Christian Studies
Social Ministry Year Curriculum

Purpose:

- To explore social justice as a theological imperative for ministry
- To experience, identify and integrate the place of social ministry in the larger ministry of the church in the world

Goals:

- To explore the prophetic tradition and its implications for ministry
- To explore the roots of economic injustice
- To develop skills in social analysis
- To understand our own social location in the context of the systems and ideologies that are operative in the world
- To connect with marginalized peoples and groups
- To understand the historical and contemporary mission of the church
- To develop skills for individual and systemic advocacy
- To develop skills in strategizing and networking for social change
- To make connections between justice issues and networks that are operative both locally and globally
- To explore and develop our commitment to solidarity

Theological Assumptions:

As a theological school committed to engaging the world and to living out of a theology of justice, we strive to ensure that students have significant experience in the area of social ministry. Social ministry is an expression of the mission of the church as it engages in the struggle for justice, the embodiment of care and compassion, and the goal of life in all its fullness, both for individuals and communities. It includes working towards right relation with other persons, among communities, and within the whole of creation. It also involves developing skills in social analysis and action, education and transformation.

In the Social Ministry Year, opportunities are given to learn from and with those who are marginalized, to develop an understanding of oppression and to practice a ministry of accompaniment. The goal is to engage others' realities with respect, and not to proselytize. In exploring the realities and concerns of groups and communities (specific and global), justice is sought in both community and church.

Field Placement

In the Social Ministry Year it is expected that students will be involved in a field placement for an average of twelve hours a week from September through April. The field site, which is selected in consultation with staff and others in the student's local community, may be a church related ministry (eg. a community outreach ministry) or an agency or organization working for social justice (eg. a shelter for women and children). It is expected that the work of the field will involve the student in working directly with marginalized people to develop skills in social analysis and to explore a commitment to solidarity.