



PAST307 / MINS 405

A Practical Theology of Mental Health

Campus Course Outline 2020

SEMESTER 1 2020

Intensive:

1pm on Monday 27th January to 1 pm on Friday 31st January 2020.

Course Coordinator:

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Lecturer:

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This course explores the practical and theological implications of the experiences of people living with mental health challenges. It explores a number of key areas with a view to helping the church as a Body, and Christians as individuals faithfully to understand and respond to complex mental health issues. The course will use a multidisciplinary approach to explore some of the ways in which theology in its theoretical and practical dimensions can throw fresh light on mental health issues in ways that are challenging of, but complementary of other perspectives. Amongst other things the course will develop understandings of

mental health experiences such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and major depression, as well as thinking through crucial issues in relation to areas such as dementia and brain damage. At the end of the course students should have a firm grasp of the nature of mental health and ill-health from a variety of perspectives and should be able to offer understanding and assistance to people living with mental health issues.

As an Intensive Course, the paper requires all students to attend a week of lectures in Dunedin, at the Knox Centre for Ministry and Leadership, Knox College, Arden Street, from 1pm on Monday 27th January to 1pm on Friday 31st January. Students are expected to arrange their own travel and accommodation. Some accommodation is available at Knox College: see their webpage at:

<http://www.knoxcollege.ac.nz/conferences>

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students taking this paper at **300--level** will be able to:

1. Develop a familiarity with the discipline of practical theology with its core emphases on the interconnectedness between theology and practice.
2. Be able to distinguish clearly between medical understandings of mental health and theological perspectives.
3. Understand the importance of recognising the diversity of what it means to be human and to live humanly.
4. Understand the nature of Christian community and the ways in which issues related to mental health shed light on the meaning of being together.
5. Draw on their own knowledge, practice and experience to throw light on the issues that surround mental health.

Students taking this paper at **400--level** will be able to:

1. Develop a familiarity with the discipline of practical theology with its core emphases on the interconnectedness between theory and practice.
2. Critically analyse a wide variety of literature within the area of mental health issues.
3. Have a critical perspective on a number of key theologians' thinking on mental health.
4. Be able to distinguish clearly between medical understandings of mental health and theological perspectives.
5. Critically evaluate the ways in which issues related to mental health lead to understanding of the meaning and nature of Christian community.
6. In the light of their own knowledge, practice and experience, develop critical perspectives on key theological issues that are involved in the study of mental health.

The generic and specific attributes of the Graduate Profile that are achieved by this paper:

- **scholarship:** Commitment to the fundamental importance of the acquisition and development of knowledge and understanding;
- **critical thinking:** Ability to analyze issues logically, to challenge conventional assumptions, to consider different options and viewpoints, make informed decisions and act with flexibility, adaptability and creativity
- **cultural understanding:** knowledge and appreciation of multiculturalism; and an ability to apply such knowledge in a culturally appropriate manner.
- **ethics:** Knowledge of ethics and ethical standards and an ability to apply these with a sense of responsibility within the workplace and community

OUTLINE OF TOPICS

Module 1: Introduction to Practical Theology and Mental Health

An introduction to the core disciplines that underpin the course, namely practical theology, disability theology and mental health studies. This module will provide students with the tools and perspectives necessary to engage with the issues that form the remainder of the course.

Module 2: Understanding Depression and Anxiety: Towards a theology of liberation and joy

This module will focus on developing a deep understanding of depression and anxiety. It will focus specifically on a theology of joy and how a proper understanding of joy helps us to understand depression in new and faithful ways. Issues and questions addressed will include the following:

- What are we to make of the fact that God seems to disappear when people are deeply depressed?
- Does Jesus really mean for us not to be anxious?
- How do we deal theologically and practically with suicidal thoughts?
- How are we to faithfully understand the act of suicide?
- Is Scripture helpful or unhelpful in dealing with depression?
- What kind of liturgy do we need to develop to incorporate people who feel depressed and anxious?
- What kind of community do we need to become to handle sadness faithfully?

Module 3: Understanding schizophrenia

This module will explore two of the most serious forms of mental health challenge: schizophrenia and bipolar disorder. These experiences offer challenges to what we consider to be normal and open up deep and vital practical and theological issues. The module will explore the nature of psychotic experience with a particular focus on the spiritual and theological dimensions. Questions addressed here will include:

- Why is it that recovery from schizophrenia in Africa is significantly better than for recovery in the Western world in general and the US in particular?
- What exactly does it mean for someone to hear voices?
- What might it mean for our understanding of schizophrenia that some of the most powerful religious people in history – Jesus, Mohammed, Gandhi, Martin Luther King – all heard voices.
- What kind of community do we have to become to offer friendships to people with severe mental health challenges?

Module 4: Bipolar Faith?: Reflecting theologically on bipolar disorder.

Building on the perspectives developed in the previous 3 modules, this module will offer a different way of thinking about religion and spirituality in the context of bipolar disorder. Questions addressed will include:

- Are the spiritual experience that people go through during psychotic experiences “authentic” or are they a product of their “illness”?
- How are we to understand and respond to people who live with delusions that have religious content?
- What is the relationship (if any) between sin and the demonic and major mental health challenges?
- What kind of worship practices do we need to develop in order to incorporate people who live with enduring schizophrenia or bipolar disorder?

Module 5: Forgetting Whose We Are: A practical theology of dementia

Dementia is more feared than cancer. Why is this? What is it that scares us about dementia? The fear of losing our memory? The fear of losing our-selves? The module will explore dementia and offer a perspective that indicates that dementia is as much a social, psychological and spiritual experience as it is a neurological one. We will re-think dementia in the light of God’s memory and offer a counter-story to the negative stories that are told about dementia within western cultures. Theological reflection on dementia helps us to understand what it means to be fully human when we have forgotten who and whose we are.

Throughout, students will be expected both to engage with the reading that is prescribed and to think through how this applies to their particular situations and contexts.

TEACHING

The course is taught as an Intensive block course in Dunedin, commencing at 1:00pm on Monday 27 January and concluding at 1pm on Friday 31st of January. Most sessions will be taught at the University of Otago campus, plus a Tuesday evening session at the Knox Centre for Ministry and Leadership, Arden Street, North Dunedin (check Blackboard for details). Students are required to provide their own meals, or purchase locally. Students wishing to study this paper for interest only (audit) will need to contact Susan Peters at registrar@knoxcentre.ac.nz to arrange this. Presbyterian ministers are encouraged to check regarding possible Ministry Study Leave assistance.

NOTE: All students are required to attend the Intensive, and will need to arrange their own travel, meals and accommodation.

ASSESSMENT

The course is assessed at 300 level by two **2,000 word essays**, each worth 30%, and one **2,700 word essay** worth 40%.

The course is assessed at 400 level by two **2,200 word essays**, each worth 30%, and one **2,700 word essay** worth 40%.

There is no final examination for this paper.

BIBLE

The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) published in 1989 is the recommended Bible text. Note that there are editions with or without the Apocrypha/Deuterocanonical books. The full edition (with the Apocrypha/Deuterocanonical books) is recommended. It is sometimes helpful to compare the NRSV's translation with that of other modern English versions, but the NRSV is the text from which we shall be working.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Day 1:

1:00 – 1:40 p.m.

1:40 – 2:15 p.m.

2:15 – 2:30 p.m.

2:30 – 3:30 p.m.

3:30 – 4:00 p.m.

4:00 – 5:00 p.m.

Monday 27 January

Introduction to Practical Theology and Mental Health

What is Practical Theology?

Break

What is Mental Health?

Tea/coffee

A Practical Theology of Mental Health?

Day 2:

9:00 – 9:50 a.m.

9:50 – 10:00 a.m.

10:00 – 11:00 a.m.

11:00 – 11:30 a.m.

11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

12:30 – 1:30 p.m.

1:30 – 3:30 p.m.

Tuesday 28 January

Understanding Depression and Anxiety: Provisional thoughts and concepts

Break

Understanding Depression and Anxiety: Towards a theology of liberation and joy - Part 1

Tea/Coffee

Understanding Depression and Anxiety: Towards a theology of liberation and joy - Part 2

Lunch

Facilitated discussion on depression and worship

Break followed by evening session at the Knox Centre for Ministry and Leadership (KCML), Arden Street, Opoho.

7:30 – 9:00 p.m. Public Session at KCML: How might this apply to our ministries?

Day 3:

9.00 – 9.50 a.m.

9.50 – 10.00 a.m.

10.00 – 10.45 a.m.

10.45 – 11.15 a.m.

11.15 a.m. – 12.00 p.m.

1.00 – 2.00 p.m.

2.00 – 3.00 p.m.

3.00 – 3.30 p.m.

3.30 – 5.00 p.m.

Wednesday 29 January

Introduction to psychosis and schizophrenia

Break

Hearing Voices: Human and Divine Part 1

Tea/Coffee

Hearing Voices: Human and Divine Part 2

Lunch

Finding God in our Meds: re-thinking medication as a spiritual practice.

Tea/Coffee

Group work on the role of the church in caring for people living with psychosis

Day 4:

9:00 – 10:00 a.m.

10:00 – 10:15 a.m.

10:15 – 11:15 a.m.

11:15 – 11:30 a.m.

11:30 a.m. – 1.00 p.m.

1:00 – 2:00 p.m.

2:00 – 3:00 p.m.

3:00 – 3:30 p.m.

3:30 – 4:30 p.m.

4:30 – 5:00 p.m.

Thursday 30 January

Bipolar Faith: Understanding spirituality in psychosis differently

Break

The nature of the experience

Tea/Coffee

Reflections on the lived experience of Christians living with bipolar disorder part 1

Lunch

Reflections on the lived experience of Christians living with bipolar disorder part 2

Tea/Coffee

Group work: sharing experience and developing pastoral insights

Summation and conclusion

Day 5:

9.00 – 10.00 a.m.

10.00 – 10.20 a.m.

10.20 – 11.20 a.m.

11.20 – 11.40 a.m.

11.40 a.m. – 12.30 p.m.

Friday 31 January

Forgetting Whose We Are: A practical theology of dementia

Break

Dementia, memory and worship

Tea/Coffee

Summary and Conclusions

REQUIRED READINGS

Unless noted otherwise these are printed in the Course Book. Please read ahead -- all these readings will be addressed in class. For audit students who enrol through KCML, readings will be available on KCML Moodle. Audit students are strongly

encouraged to undertake the reading, in order to enhance their learning and the work done in group sessions.

Day 1

R1: Swinton and Mowatt: What is practical theology?

Practical Theology and Qualitative Research, London: SCM Press, 2006. pp. 3--27.

R2: Swinton: 'Who is the God we worship?'

'Who is the God we Worship?': Theologies of disability; challenges and new possibilities.' International Journal of Practical Theology. Vol. 14. No. 2. Feb 2011.

R3: John Wilkinson: The Bible and Healing: A Medical and Theological Commentary Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000. pp. 7--30.

Day 2

R4: Kathryn Greene-McCreight (2005) Darkness Is My Only Companion: A Christian Response to Mental Illness Brazos Press. Chapters 1, 2 & 3

Day 3

R5: Tanya Luhrmann: 'Living with voices' The American Scholar, Summer 2012

R6: Tanya Luhrmann: 'Beyond the brain' The Wilson Quarterly, Summer, 2012

R7: Michael Boiven, 'Finding god in prozac or finding prozac in God: Preserving a Christian view of the person amidst a biopsychological revolution.' January 2002 Christian scholar's review 32(2):159-178. (also available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/266001913_Finding_god_in_prozac_or_finding_prozac_in_God_Preserving_a_Christian_view_of_the_person_amidst_a_biopsychological_revolution)

Day 4

R8: Students should read the papers and commentaries on Monica Coleman's book: Bipolar Faith: A black woman's journey with depression and faith: <https://syndicate.network/symposia/theology/bipolar-faith/>

Day 5

R9: John Swinton: Personhood and Humanness: The Importance of Being a Creature. Dementia: Living in the memories of God. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans. 2012. pp. 153-85

In order to prepare for the Intensive course, it would be helpful to read both the text book and the required readings listed above. For University of Otago credit students, readings can be accessed and printed from Blackboard or the Library's electronic Course Reserve list for this paper (see link on the Blackboard page).

RESOURCES

- The Course Reader and this accompanying Course Outline
- A required textbook: **John E Colewell: Why Have You Forsaken Me?: A personal reflection on the experience of desolation. London Paternoster 2014.** The textbook is available as a Kindle eBook, and also for purchase through the University Bookshop, Dunedin. Limited electronic copies will be available to borrow via the University Library's eReserve system.

THIS IS IMPORTANT!

Please Note: You **must have access to Blackboard and your University email address** in order to complete this paper. You will receive access once your enrolment is complete. Communications from your lecturer regarding teaching matters will be provided only through Blackboard and your University email address, as outlined in the University's Student Communications Policy, so you must check these emails regularly. eVision will also send important messages through your University email. If you have any concerns about your access to Blackboard or to other course resources, please contact the lecturer or administrative staff immediately so that these can be resolved.

You will find there is a lot of helpful information and resources on the Theology Programme website. In particular, we require you to read the section called "Essential Student Information." You will find it here:

<http://www.otago.ac.nz/theology/study/studentresources/>

This page provides a number of useful resources such as the Style Guide and the Plagiarism Declaration Form you must attach to your assignments. It supplies detailed information on assessment and student support. In particular, it contains guidance on the topics of plagiarism and deadlines, both of which can incur penalties if not heeded. This also is where you will find instructions for making online discussion posts and submitting assignments electronically. So it is very important you make yourself familiar with this material. Our assumption is that you have read it.

We will make reference to information on the website in the following pages, so do take the time to follow the links and absorb the material. It will save you from making costly mistakes and help to make the practical experience of distance study a straightforward one.

ASSIGNMENT QUESTIONS**At 300--level****Assignment 1: Essay**

Length: 2000 words

Value: 30% of final mark

Date due: Wednesday 23 March, 11.59 pm

Topic: What do we mean by “a theology of mental health,” and why might it be important for the church?

Assignment 2: Essay

Length: 2000 words

Value: 30% of final mark

Date due: Wednesday 27 April, 11.59 pm

Topic: Discuss some of the key issues around the significance of theology for understanding and responding to depression.

Assignment 3: Essay

Length: 2700 words

Value: 40% of final mark

Date due: Wednesday 25 May, 11.59 pm

Topic(s): Discuss the role of spirituality in the care of persons with psychotic disorder.

At 400--level**Assignment 1: Essay Length: 2200 words**

Value: 30% of final mark

Date due: Wednesday 23 March, 11.59 pm

Topic: What might Jesus teaching on the fullness of the Christian life mean for people living with dementia?

Assignment 2: Essay

Length: 2200 words

Value: 30% of final mark

Date due: Wednesday 27 April, 11.59 pm

Topic: Outline the contours of a Christian approach to the care of people with mental health challenges.

Assignment 3: Essay

Length: 2700 words

Value: 40% of final mark

Date due: Wednesday 25 May, 11.59 pm

Topic: Outline and critically reflect upon John Colewell's book and the readings from Katherine Kathryn Greene-McCreight.

REFERENCING SYSTEM

For writing essays, the Theology Programme requires that you use the 16th edition of the Chicago Style Guide, which is the norm for many academic journals in the Humanities and is often recommended for theses in the humanities. The Programme has prepared a Style Guide, which outlines the Chicago Style and offers other advice on essay presentation. You may find it via the Theology Programme's "Student Resources and Information" page:

<http://www.otago.ac.nz/theology/study/studentresources/>

SUBMITTING WRITTEN WORK

All assignments shall be submitted **electronically** via the "Assignment" feature on Blackboard by **midnight** on the due dates notified. Please do not submit paper copies. For full instructions about how to submit assignments electronically via Blackboard as well as other important information on plagiarism, grading, and deadlines, please see the "Essential Information" web page.

All Assignments submitted in the Theology Programme must be prefaced with a student Plagiarism Declaration Form. They will not be deemed to have been submitted unless and until the Plagiarism Declaration Form has been submitted. It can be downloaded from <http://www.otago.ac.nz/theology/study/studentresources/>

It is also on the Blackboard site for this course.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

All Assignments submitted in the Theology Programme must be prefaced with a student Plagiarism Declaration Form.

It can be downloaded from <http://www.otago.ac.nz/theology/study/studentresources/>
It is also on the Blackboard site for this course.

Academic integrity means being honest in your studying and assessments. It is the basis for ethical decision-making and behaviour in an academic context. Academic integrity is informed by the values of honesty, trust, responsibility, fairness, respect and courage. Students are expected to be aware of, and act in accordance with, the University's Academic Integrity Policy.

Academic Misconduct, such as plagiarism or cheating, is a breach of Academic Integrity and is taken very seriously by the University. Types of misconduct include plagiarism, copying, unauthorised collaboration, taking unauthorised material into a test or exam, impersonation, and assisting someone else's misconduct. A more extensive list of the types of academic misconduct and associated processes and penalties is available in the University's Student Academic Misconduct Procedures.

It is your responsibility to be aware of and use acceptable academic practices when completing your assessments. To access the information in the Academic Integrity Policy and learn more, please visit the University's Academic Integrity website at www.otago.ac.nz/study/academicintegrity or ask at the Student Learning Centre or Library. If you have any questions, ask your lecturer.

<http://www.otago.ac.nz/administration/policies/otago116838.html>

<http://www.otago.ac.nz/administration/policies/otago116850.html>

STUDENT SUPPORT

The “**Essential Information**” web page provides helpful information on how to access the University Library's resources, as well as a guide to the support services available to students at the University of Otago, including the Student Learning Centre and Disability Support.

For all **administrative** enquiries, please contact the Theology Administrator:
Email: theology@otago.ac.nz Phone: 03 479 8639

We recommend that you contact the Programme as soon as possible if you have any problems participating in the course or accessing resources. Please remember to check your University email account regularly for updates and announcements.

THEOLOGY PROGRAMME

University of Otago, PO Box 56, Dunedin 9054, New Zealand
www.otago.ac.nz/theology