Faith, Mental Health & Spiritual Care

CHP 550 OL

The mission of MB Seminary is to educate and equip men and women to help lead the church in reaching Canada and beyond with the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Instructor: Dr. Gloria Woodland
Email: gloriawoodland@mbseminary.ca
Credit Hours: 3
Prerequisites: none
Course Term: January 11 – March 13, 2027

Course Instruction

This course begins with an Introductory Online Session on Monday, January 11, 2027, at 4:00p.m. Pacific Time. This online course will be facilitated by Dr. Gloria Woodland. All lessons and course materials will be delivered online through the Populi Learning Management System. The course duration is 9 weeks, from January 11 – March 13, 2027.

Course Description

This course is designed to demonstrate the importance and interplay of Faith and Mental Health in holistic well-being. Students will be supported to develop their understanding of faith and mental health and the ministry of spiritual care. The integrative bio-psychosocial-spiritual perspective of care and counsel will be viewed with a growing awareness of key issues in the fields of mental health and faith. Students will review the therapeutic significance of spirituality to both caregivers and those needing care. Students will develop a pastoral, relational approach to understanding, assessing, and caring for as well as referring for care individuals in their circle of ministry.

Course Objectives

This course's theme and content are consistent with, and taught through the lens of, the Mennonite Brethren Confession of Faith. This course will:

- Enhance the ministry interactions and effectiveness of those doing spiritual care.
- Ensure students develop and understanding of the interplay of faith and mental health throughout lifespan development.

- Develop further the theoretical knowledge base for pastoral accompaniment with those experiencing mental health challenges.
- Increase competence and practical skills for the integration of spiritual perspectives and mental health care ministry

The most effective learning occurs as you carefully process information through higher-order thinking skills. Your performance and evaluation in this course will be based on demonstrating your engagement and learning, not simply repeating basic facts. In all that you do in this class, you should use higher-order thinking skills, as described below:

- Comprehension: demonstrates the ability to grasp meaning, explain, and restate ideas,
- Application: demonstrates the ability to use learned material in new situations,
- Analysis: demonstrates the ability to separate material into component parts and show relationships between the parts.
- Synthesis: demonstrates the ability to put together the separate ideas to form a new whole, to establish new relationships, and
- Evaluation: demonstrates the ability to judge the worth of material against stated criteria.

Required Texts

While there is no pre-reading requirement it would be beneficial to obtain the required texts and do as much reading as possible before the course.

- Greene-McCreight, Kathryn. *Darkness Is My Only Companion, A Christian Response to Mental Illness.* (2006) Brazos Press/Baker Publishing Group, Grand Rapids MI. ISBN: 10: 58743-175-0

- Swinton, John. *Finding Jesus in the Storm, The Spiritual Lives of Christians with Mental Health Challenges.* (2020) Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. Grand Rapids MI. ISBN: 978-0-8028-7372-9

  Recommended text – not required reading
  - Johnson, Brad W. & William L. Johnson. *The Minister's Guide to Psychological Disorders and Treatments. 2nd edition* (2014) Routledge Publishing. New York. NY ISBN: 978-0-415-71244-6

Required Viewing

- There will be two instructional online components required in addition to the recorded lectures. One is a podcast, the other a Webinar. Links for this required material will be included in the Populi Online Classroom.

Course Outline

Week One	1.1 Introduction to Topic 1.2 Intersections of Faith & Mental Health	*Darkness is My Only Companion*, Part One: Facing Mental Illness *Reading Finding Jesus in the Storm* Forum Response	
Week Two	2.1 Definitions 2.2 Bio-psychosocial-spiritual perspective of care	*Darkness is My Only Companion,* Part Two: Faith and Mental Illness Forum Q & 2A *Reading Finding Jesus in the Storm*	
Week Three	Orientation to Life Cycle Development 3.1 Human Development 3.2 Faith Development	*Darkness is My Only Companion,* Part Three: Living with Mental Illness Forum Q & 2A *A Minister's Guide*, Chapter 1 *Reading Finding Jesus in the Storm*	
Week Four	Orientation to the Horizon 4.1 Biblical & Theological 4.2 Phenomenological Conversation on Four Horizons	*A Minister's Guide*, Chapter 2 Complete Reading *Finding Jesus in the Storm* and write Response Paper based on Swinton's 4 Horizons	
Week Five	Theory, Competency and Practical Skill in Spiritual Accompaniment 5.1 Theoretical Knowledge in support of Spiritual Accompaniment 5.2 Spiritual Care as Therapeutic Understanding 5.3 Competencies for Spiritual Care	*A Minister's Guide*, Chapters 3 & 4 3 of 6 Questions	
Week Six	Practical Skill Key Issues, Assessment & Spiritual Care 6.1 Practical Thinking 6.2 Assessments to Support Spiritual Care	*A Minister's Guide*, Chapters 5 & 6 3 more of 6 Questions continued	
Week Seven	Considering Hope and Healing 7.1 Hope 7.2 Healing 7.3 Swinton Webinar	*A Minister's Guide*, Chapter 7 Swinton Webinar - Response	
Week Eight	Mental Illness and the Community of God 8.1 Being a hospitable community of God 8.2 A theology of mental health 8.3 Concluding Thoughts	Podcast - Theology of Mental Health	
Week Nine	Final Webinar	Final Assignment	

Assignments and Evaluation

Week	Due Date	Assignments	% of Grade	Cumulative %
1	January 11 January 13 January 16	Introductory Online Session Initial – substantial forum post Response to two other student posts	 5% 5%	10%
2	January 20 January 23	Initial Forum Post Responses to two other student posts	5% 5%	20%
3	January 27 January 30	Initial Forum Post Responses to two other student posts	5% 5%	30%
4	February 6	Respond to Swinton's 4 Horizons from the text *Finding Jesus in the Storm*	25%	55%
5	Monday, Wednesday & Friday February 13	A question for each of the three specified days can be found in the Forum – Week 5. All three questions must be answered. Response opportunity closes.	10%	65%
6	Monday, Wednesday & Friday February 20	A question for each of the three specified days can be found in the Forum. All three questions must be answered. Response opportunity closes.	10%	75%
9		Final Assignment	25%	100%

Online Forum Participation: (50% of final grade)

Weeks 1, 2 & 3 will have forum participation required using the Wednesday – Saturday pattern of posting. Each forum will have a question or thought posted, which will require your response. Please post your initial substantive post no later than Wednesday. After reading the responses of others, select 2 classmates posts which you will respond to by Saturday of the same week. You will be awarded up to 5% for your initial post and another 5% for your responses to classmates for a total of 10% weekly.
Weeks 5 & 6 will also require forum participation however it will be in a different style. I will post questions, one at a time on select days and you will respond to me, on my post, conversationally, one after the other. Your responses are yours, no research or reference needed. Just share your thoughts in 250 words or less. Full details will be on the course site.

On specified weeks you are required to participate in the online forum, where you will have an opportunity to interact with others in the class around key questions, and course content. The total value of the forum posts will contribute to 50% of your total grade for the course. Unless otherwise directed; In the online forums you will need to post your initial substantive response by Wednesday of each week. Then by the Saturday of each week, you will respond with conversational contributions to at least two other students. You are welcome to enter discussion with more than two, if you would like to. By conversational contributions, I mean simply joining the flow of discussion with shorter responses (e.g. questions, affirmations, quick thoughts about what someone has said). By substantive responses, I mean responses that show a deep processing of relevant ideas (this should take 200-300 words maximum).
We have a tremendous opportunity to build upon one another's knowledge, insights, and experience. Our goal is to collaborate in the forum. We anticipate that the forums will be a rich time of dialogue. To create a safe environment for this to take place, we must build a supportive subculture that encourages one another. When expressing disagreement it should be done in an edifying manner.

Substantive participation may include (among other things):
• Providing and developing new thoughts, ideas, or perspective.
• Citing an experience or example of what we are learning and showing how it applies.
• Adding a new twist on a perspective.
• Critically reflecting on an idea/concept.
• Questioning or challenging a principle/perspective and giving reasons for your questioning.
• Integrating Scripture and other sources in a meaningful way

What Substantive Participation is NOT:
• Very basic comments such as "I agree" or "I disagree."
• Restating what someone has said (unless there is a direct purpose in doing so).
• Disrespectfully disagreeing.
• Pat answers that are not thought-provoking. Below are examples of how to stimulate your own and others' thinking:
    - What would happen if... • Other times it may be helpful to... • It is my understanding...what is your experience with this? • You might approach this from... • Is it possible that... • Would you consider... • Maybe... • Possibly... • Sometimes... • I'm wondering if... • Do you think...

Note: You can use any of your forum posts in other papers for this course. I would also encourage you to view the posts of others as resources that you can cite in your papers. Everyone brings a wealth of insights into the class!

Assignment: Finding Jesus In The Storm 25%
A Personal Response to Swinton's Four Horizons

This assignment focuses on developing an understanding informed by phenomenology and a hermeneutic of spirituality in the lives of individuals who live with mental disorders. Your understanding of the spiritual lives of those with mental illness is composed of multiple views or what Swinton calls four primary horizons. As you read pages 46 to 51 in the text questions will arise as you consider each horizon. For this assignment you are to read and consider the horizons presented, consider the questions that resonate with you and write a response to the phenomenological conversation on the four horizons. You are to write a minimum of 8 and a maximum of 10 pages.

Here are a few sample questions. Feel free to use these or you can pose and answer your other questions, which come to mind as you consider Swinton's Four Horizons.

- What is your horizon, that influences the way you spend time with people who have mental health challenges?
- What issues come up for you regarding theology, practice and Christians with mental health issues?
- How is your comfort level as a disciple in talking with another disciple, who has a mental health challenge, about the things of God?
- What are your thoughts on the field of mental health care?
- How do you navigate the theological horizon that is the combination of Scripture, Christian tradition, and the life of the church?

Assignment: The Spiritual Lives of Christians with Mental Health Challenges 25%

People living with mental health challenges are not excluded from God's love or even the fullness of life promised by Jesus. Unfortunately, this hope is often obscured by the well-meaning labels and medical treatments that dominate the world of mental health today. In his latest book *Finding Jesus in the Storm,* John Swinton makes a call for the church to be an epicenter of compassion for those experiencing depression, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and related difficulties.
By the time you view the assigned webinar you are to have completed reading the text *Jesus in the Storm.* After watching the webinar, you are to reflect on the presentation and write a reflection that includes:

- Your overall understanding and reaction to the teaching.
- Three points that describe your new learning or increased awareness with an added explanation of how this new learning will support your current or future ministry.

You are to support your writing by referencing the text and additional resources.
You are to submit a minimum of 8 and a maximum of 10 pages for this assignment.

Course Evaluation

Near the conclusion of this course, you will be asked to complete a course evaluation. Because feedback is very important to us, the course evaluation is a required part of the course and is tied to the submission of your last assignment. The course evaluation will be integrated into the Populi classroom in Week 8.

Grading Scale

Letter Grade	Description	Grade Point	Meaning in Graduate Work
A+	Superior	4.30	Exceptionally well-reasoned, compelling development of position. Outstanding incorporation of personal vision as well as of references and resources. Strikingly appropriate examples. Extraordinary insight, critical analytical and evaluative ability, and creativity. Superlative style and language usage. Makes an original contribution and is potentially publishable.
A	Excellent	4.00	Well-argued and convincing development of position. Insightful incorporation of personal vision as well as of references and resources. Notably appropriate examples. Excellent insight, critical analytic and evaluative ability, and creativity. Impressive style and language use.
A-	Very Good	3.70	Thorough and plausible development of position. Skillful incorporation of personal vision as well as of references and resources. Very good examples. Very good insight, analytic and evaluative ability, and creativity. Commendable and fluent style and language usage.
B+	Proficient	3.30	Proficient development of position. Appropriate incorporation of personal vision as well as of references and resources. Relevant examples. Good quality insight, analytic and evaluative ability, and creativity. Clear and correct style and language usage.
B	Good	3.00	Competent development of position, but possibly with some gaps and/or limitations. Good incorporation of personal vision as well as of references and resources. Good examples. Reasonable insight, analytic and evaluative ability. Little creativity. Generally good style and language usage, but possibly with some minor flaws.
B-	Average	2.70	Average development of position, but with obvious gaps and/or limitations. Satisfactory incorporation of personal vision as well as of references and resources. Satisfactory examples. Reasonable insight, analytic and evaluative ability. Little creativity. Generally satisfactory style and language usage, but possibly with some minor flaws.
C+	Adequate	2.30	Adequate development of position with significant gaps and/or limitations. Some incorporation of personal vision as well as references and resources. Adequate use of examples. Very little creativity. Considerable number of issues related to coherence and style.
C	Acceptable	2.00	Limited development of position with a noticeable lack of consistency with personal vision or references. Limited integration with external sources. Acceptable analytic and evaluative ability. Numerous weaknesses in terms of clarity, coherence, and grammar.
C-	Needs Work	1.70	Passable but unimpressive development of position. Position not completely consistent with personal vision or references and resources not taken fully into account or examples are basic or not completely convincing or barely acceptable insight and analytic and evaluative ability. Adequate style and language usage, but with weaknesses in some respects (e.g., clarity, coherence, grammar). Overall quality shows noticeable deficiencies.
F	Below Standard	0.00	Unacceptable work at graduate level. Shows lack of understanding and/or competence in several of the criteria described above. This grade is a failing grade at the graduate level.

Important Academic Notes

Academic Integrity and Avoiding Plagiarism

As Christian scholars pursuing higher education, academic integrity is a core value of the entire MB Seminary community. Students are invited into this scholarly culture and required to abide by the principles of sound academic scholarship at MB Seminary. Instances of academic misconduct are taken seriously at MB Seminary, and appropriate consequences for plagiarism and academic fraud will be applied.

Artificial Intelligence

The inappropriate use of artificial intelligence tools is also a form of Academic Misconduct. Generative AI, when properly cited, may support a student's work, but it may not be used to transform it. Therefore,

> When students use generative artificial intelligence tools to **research** any course-related work, the generated material must be clearly and correctly indicated and cited using the Chicago/Turabian referencing style for generative AI. Additionally, students must also cite the exact prompts used.
>
> Citation is not required to document the use of simple proofreading. However, generative **AI tools may not be used to translate, paraphrase, or increase the fluency of a student's original work.** Therefore, if the AI tool's results produce material changes to your wording, structure, phrasing, language, or style, you are in contravention of this policy.

Failure to clearly indicate and reference AI-generated material or any use of AI paraphrasing tools that alter syntax, originality and/or clarity will be considered a violation of academic integrity and reported as academic fraud.

For specific issues related to your course, students are encouraged to contact their course professors directly.

Paper Formatting

Students are required to adhere to the Turabian Notes (Bibliography) format for all papers. Please consult the Turabian Citation Quick Guide for information or:

Turabian, Kate, L. *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Thesis, and Dissertations,* 9th ed. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2018.

Assignment Grade Appeals

Students can appeal an assignment's grade to the course instructor by stating their reasons for contesting the grade in writing. The deadline for such appeals is one week after the student has

received their grade. Formal course grade appeals can be made directly to Dr. Brian Cooper, Director of Student Development, briancooper@mbseminary.ca. These must be submitted in writing within 14 days of the grade being posted.

Web Support-Student Portal — https://mbseminary.populiweb.com

All students at MB Seminary will receive an MBS-Populi username and password. This is determined at the time of an online application. If you have any difficulty with your password or your login credentials, please contact Keith Reed, Director of Church Equipping, keithreed@mbseminary.ca.

Course Intensive/Campus Closure

In the event of deteriorating weather conditions or other emergency situations, every effort will be made to communicate class cancellation information to your church host and contact. You should also check the Populi classroom for updates.

Equity of Access

It is the responsibility of a student with a learning disability to inform the MB Seminary Director of Student Development (briancooper@mbseminary.ca) of this fact **before the start of a course** so that necessary arrangements can be made to support the student's learning. Medical documentation is required, along with a description of the accommodation the student is seeking. Students are encouraged to have any accommodations granted in place well before the start of their course.