

ASSOCIATED CANADIAN THEOLOGICAL SCHOOLS
MTS 685/686: MTS Integrative Seminar (1, 2)

Bruce L. Guenther (bruce.guenther@twu.ca)

Fall Semester 2008
Spring Semester 2009
2 Modules, Together 1 Credit Hour

I. Course Description

The Integrative Seminar is designed to help MTS students develop in personal, interpersonal, and professional areas that complement focused academic study as important requisites for scholarly and/or educational ministry. Students are encouraged to become active participants in ACTS academic community dialogue. They will engage in individual and group reflection on the practical dynamics of scholarly life and educational ministry, and will be involved in field work in the area of their specialization and vocational goals.

Though MTS 685 and 686 are formally structured as two modules taken over two semesters, they are designed to function together as a single unit. This Integrative Seminar serves as a follow-up to MTS 803, though that class is not required as a prerequisite.

II. Course Objectives

Through this seminar and related field experience, the student should:

- Be able to discuss the role of scholarly work in the life of the Church;
- Become more conversant with a variety of practical features of scholarly and educational ministry (in academic and/or church settings)—features such as professional development planning, curriculum and course design, instructional strategy, evaluation mechanisms, grading, academic advising, committee work, or publication;
- Begin to formulate (and on a limited basis, test) personal strategies to deal with these features where they are relevant to his or her own calling;
- Increase proficiency in selected practical skills relevant to his or her own area of Christian scholarship and educational ministry (for example: teaching, grading, or course design);
- Demonstrate relational and group-dynamics skills through structured interaction with faculty and peers;
- Contribute to the scholarly dialogue of the ACTS community by participating in structured academic exchanges;
- Begin to build a documented portfolio of experience and academic mentoring relationships that may enhance long-range scholarly and professional academic goals.

III. Context and Course Design

Most students in the MTS program sense that God is leading them into some form of scholarly and/or educational ministry. To equip themselves for such a calling, these students will need more than expertise in their chosen subject areas. Classes in OT, NT, theology, history, or apologetics simply will not suffice, important as they are. Students also need to be part of a learning community where scholarly interaction is modeled on a consistent basis. They require opportunities to begin engaging in publication and critical dialogue. They must be exposed to the realities of professorial life. And they need to be sharpening their own skills as educators by teaching others while they study.

At ACTS, we provide opportunities for growth in all these areas. Some students will work alongside faculty as TAs. All are invited to participate in faculty-staff colloquia, listening to scholarly presentations and interacting together. Nearly all our programs involve some form of internship or field work, where students put their learning into action in external ministry settings. These and other opportunities supplement course work and thesis-writing as means of preparing men and women for scholarly and educational ministry.

This seminar is designed to promote these aspects of academic community on the ACTS campus, and to ensure that MTS students take full advantage of such learning experiences. It combines elements of a traditional internship with discussion sessions and accountability structures for participation in academic life on our campus. Course assignments include:

- Participation in colloquia
- Discussion sessions with faculty and student peers
- Engagement with other student/faculty research
- Field work relevant to the student's ministry/career objectives

The seminar is divided into two separate 1-credit modules, each taken over 1 semester (spring and fall). Normally, students will enroll in successive semesters, starting either in fall or spring. (Spring is generally preferable.)

Total time involvement for the 2 combined modules is approximately 80 hrs. Some class assignments are done on a semesterly basis (i.e., they are done in each semester the student is registered for Integrative Seminar). Some assignments are done only once over the total seminar, and can be spread over the 2 semesters at the student's discretion. A single grade for the complete Integrative Seminar will be granted at the end of the student's second semester.

IV. Course Requirements

A. Colloquia (Each Semester)

Students will be expected to attend at least two academic colloquium, public lecture or conference presentations each semester, and to participate in discussion as appropriate. The ACTS MTS/MTh program committee attempts to organize at least one or two colloquia each semester featuring either faculty members or senior students. Each colloquium is held over the lunch hour, and lasts approximately 90-120 minutes. Normally one or two individuals (faculty,

students, or guests) will present a brief paper. Presentations may be followed by reflections from a respondent, and always by open discussion. More details on dates, topics, etc., will be posted. Feel free also to check with the MTS program chair.

Unless special permission is granted, students will be expected to attend at least one colloquium each semester at ACTS. In the event that ACTS does not offer a sufficient number of events you may attend another colloquium, lecture or conference event. If you attend an event outside of ACTS, you must provide a 1-page summary that includes:

- Basic info on the event itself: date, place, participants, topic, etc.
- The main thesis of the presenter(s)
- A few evaluative comments on the presentation (yours and/or those of others who responded)
- Brief thoughts on what you may have learned from the experience

These 1-page summaries are to be submitted to the instructor by the last day of classes in the semester.

B. Class and Discussion Sessions (Each Semester)

In addition to attending colloquia, students will be required to participate in two MTS 803 class and discussion sessions during the Fall semester. The class session will take place on Wednesday, 12 November 2008, and the open discussion session will take place on 19 November 2008. The discussion forum will be highly interactive and will be directed by questions raised by students and can include topics related to academic life, educational philosophy, educational issues and methodologies, scholarly research and publication, job search, program issues, field work experiences, etc. Attendance at these sessions should be documented in your portfolio.

During the Spring semester students need to schedule a meeting with the MTS program chair. The discussion will centre around your progress in the program, but may also explore any other aspect of academic life of interest to you. Depending on the number of individuals enrolled in the Integrative Seminar, the program chair may try to create a group meeting.

C. Field Work (Each Semester)

Each semester that you are enrolled in the MTS Integrative Seminar, **you are expected to be involved in structured field work relevant to your program, area of study, personal goals, and anticipated future ministry.** For MTS students, field work might involve serving as a faculty TA, teaching (or assistant teaching) a college or seminary course, teaching a class in a church or parachurch setting, assisting a faculty member (or in some cases a pastor or denominational leader) in a research or publication project, etc. Various types of involvement are appropriate. A suitable field assignment for this course should:

- Involve one or more major academic skill (research, course design/prep, instruction, learning evaluation, academic administration), preferably several of these;
- Be structured and planned around a clear set of measurable goals, established early in the semester (you should be able to say just what you are going to do, what you hope

to achieve through it, and what you expect to learn in the process, before the ministry involvement starts);

- Be accountable to one or more competent individual in the ministry area who will oversee your involvement and be able to give you constructive feedback;
- Receive evaluative and developmental feedback from your overseer in the field;

Total involvement time in field work should be at least 25 hours per semester. This includes preparation and interaction time as well as instructional contact time.

Your field work will be planned and reported in a self-syllabus and gradesheet, discussed below under “portfolio.”

D. Reading (Distributed Over Both Semesters)

As a participant in the MTS Integrative Seminar, **you are expected to read:**

- 1 issues (or equivalent) of a scholarly journal in your field of specialization (*Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society, Journal of Biblical Literature, Church History, etc.*)
- 100 pages on effective educational ministry, from sources of your own choosing

Reading should be documented succinctly in your portfolio.

E. Portfolio (Distributed Over Both Semesters)

Many colleges and universities require their faculty to maintain portfolios as part of the evaluation and professional development process. The aspiring academic would do well to build the habit of portfolio maintenance at an early stage in his or her training. These same tools are often highly valuable in obtaining employment, in churches as well as school settings.

What is a portfolio? Basically it is a file in which you keep relevant information about your past experience, your demonstrated competencies, and your strategy for present and future development as a scholar or educator.

For this seminar, you will begin to develop a scholar’s portfolio. Plan to include at least the following elements:

1. Course assignment attendance records. Provide documentation tracking your attendance at colloquia, discussion sessions (plus pages summarizing alternatives if necessary).
2. Reading report. Include an annotated bibliography indicating the number of pages read from each work, and the journal issue selected.
3. Field work self-syllabus and gradesheet.

Earlier I noted that your field work needs to be structured around a clear, thoughtful plan, with mechanisms for evaluation. Rather than providing you with a stock learning contract and evaluation form, I am requiring you to design your own learning plan and evaluation

documents. To make the exercise most helpful, *you will structure the learning plan to approximate a course syllabus* (the “self-syllabus”), and *your evaluation documents should be set up the way you might provide students with evaluation on their work in a course.*

Your self-syllabus should include:

- A *course title* (what would you call the field work you’re going to be doing?)
- A *course description* (a brief summary of your field involvement, describing what you will be doing, where, with whom, and when)
- A list of student-centered, potentially measurable “*course objectives*” for the field work. What do you want to learn and how would you like to grow through this involvement? (You may want to comment on what you hope to contribute in your area of ministry, too, though the main focus of this syllabus is *your learning.*)
- Your “*course assignments.*” What tasks do you plan to do in order to accomplish these goals within your field work? How should they be done? How will you measure your success?
- A “*course grading*” section, listing the assignments you have given yourself and assigning a point value to each. (Possible points for all the assignments should add up to 100.)
- A “*course schedule,*” setting out the tentative timeframe in which you will be doing your field work.

Your gradesheet should include:

- A *list of all the assignments* for your field work which you established in your self-syllabus.
- A *numeric score* which you believe accurately reflects the quality of the work you did relative to each assignment.
- A *total numeric score* for your field work. (This would be your assessment of your final grade.)
- Some *brief comments* on each of the assignments you have done. How did the tasks go? What went well, and why? What could have been improved? What would you do differently next time? What did you learn from the experience? Comments do not need to be extensive, but should demonstrate good evaluative reflection.
- *Supervisor’s signature* (and comments as appropriate.)

I am not requiring you to obtain a detailed report from the individual who supervises your field work. I *am* assuming that you will get person-to-person feedback on the assignments, which will be reflected in your own personal assessment. If your supervisor is able and willing to provide some comments of his/her own on one or more of the assignments, those are certainly welcome as well. (They may be included in the gradesheet or attached separately.)

Whether or not the supervisor adds comments, his or her signature should appear on the gradesheet as a means of ensuring good accountability. Be sure to provide a place for that signature.

You are welcome to include anything else in the portfolio that you think may be helpful as a reflection of your learning now, or as a tool for future growth or evaluation. This assignment is designed to help you build the habit of collecting professional development information.

Your portfolio is due for grading no later than the last day of class in your 2nd semester in the MTS Integrative Seminar.

Students completing their 1st semester in the Seminar are expected to submit their portfolios on the last day of class, for feedback but not for a formal grade.

V. Course Grading

The grades for this course are distributed as follows:

Participation in colloquia (4)	20
Participation in discussion sessions (4).....	20
Field work and docs (sem 1).....	25
Field work and docs (sem 2).....	25
Reading	10
Portfolio	
Total:	100

(No grade is assigned for the portfolio. However, grades on all other aspects of the course incorporate the materials included in the portfolio. If you do not submit a portfolio, it will not be possible to assign a grade for attendance, field work, paper and response, or reading.)

Please note that a single grade will be assigned for the entire MTS Integrative Seminar at the conclusion of your second semester module. It will take into account all your work for both modules.

In the event that a student completes the first module of the Seminar but does not go on to the second, assignments from the first semester will be evaluated on a pass/fail basis and a pass or fail will be granted for that 1 semester hour of credit.