**Houston Graduate School of Theology**

PL/CS 640 Systems Thinking in Organizational Contexts

Fall 2015, Mondays, 5:30-8:15 PM

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*Houston Graduate School of Theology equips women and men to be ministers and*

*messengers of God’s mission of reconciliation through academic excellence,*

*personal transformation, and leadership development*

1. **Course Description**

An exploration of (1) the ways in which those linked together in formal and informal organizations function like a family system; (2) the contributions of systems thinking to organizational leadership development; and (3) the strategies an emerging or current leader can develop to grow in his or her ability to lead as a less anxious person in an anxious system.

1. **Goals and Objectives**

Upon completion of this course, the student will:

1. Apply and integrate family systems concepts discovered through the reading of the texts and class instruction by means of written assignments and verbal interaction.
2. Discuss a growing understanding of the application of Bowen Theory to congregational systems through written assignments and verbal interaction.
3. Determine a strategy for becoming a less anxious presence.
4. Compare and contrast the ministry of Jesus with the principles set forth in Bowen Theory by development of a philosophy of ministry.
5. Develop, demonstrate, and integrate a systems approach to leadership development, congregational life, and ministry in general by means of a major paper and comprehensive exam.

**III. Texts**

Gilbert Roberta M. *The Eight Concepts of Bowen Theory*. Front Royal, VA: Leading Systems Press, 2004.

O’Conner, Joseph & Ian McDermott. *The Art of Systems Thinking.* (Kindle Edition) San Francisco: Thorsons, 1997. ISBN 978-0722534427.

Richardson, Ronald W. *Becoming a Healthier Pastor: Family Systems Theory and the Pastor's Own Family.* Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 2004. ISBN 978-0800636395.

Steinke, Peter L. *How Your Church Family Works: Understanding Congregations as Emotional Systems*. Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2006. ISBN 978-1566993296

**IV. Course Requirements**

# Participation: In order to receive full participation points, which will comprise 5% of the final grade, students will arrive on time, participate in class

# discussion; be absent no more than two times during the semester, and exhibit excellence in effort, adherence to deadlines, and reliability.

1. Write a **four-page formal book review** of the book *Becoming a Healthier Pastor: Family Systems Theory and the Pastor's Own Family* by Ronald Richardson. The book review is due on **September 14 comprises 15% of the final grade.**

Book reviews should include a cover page, a bibliographic entry, the author’s purpose, a summary of the contents, a critical evaluation, and an application section. Each part of the paper should be identified with a section heading. Book reviews should be four pages not including the cover page. Third person should be used throughout. Special attention should be given to the critical evaluation and application sections. Think about the content of the book. Make certain that the professor has no doubt that you have read the book and absorbed the content. No footnotes are needed unless a source other than the book being reviewed is quoted.

1. Write an **informal one- to two-page paper** describing a story of your reconnecting with an important person in your life from whom you have been cut-off. The paper is due on **September 21** **and comprises 10% of the final grade.**
2. Each student will draw (freehand or computer-generated) his or her family diagram. The diagram will reveal research into the family of origin through at least four generations with as much information included as possible. The diagram with at least two pages of insights gained, **due October 26, will comprise 10% of the final grade.**
3. Write a one- to two-page **summary for each of the eight concepts** of Bowen Family Systems Theory. This paper will be no more than sixteen pages. The summary papers are informal. The summary paper is due on **November 2 and comprises 20% of the final grade.**
4. Write a **four-page formal book review** of the book *How Your Church Family Works* by Peter L. Steinke. The book review is due on **November 16 and** **comprises 15% of the final grade.**

Book reviews should include a cover page, a bibliographic entry, the author’s purpose, a summary of the contents, a critical evaluation, and an application section. Each part of the paper should be identified with a section heading. Book reviews should be four pages not including the cover page. Third person should be used throughout. Special attention should be given to the critical evaluation and application sections. Think about the content of the book. Make certain that the professor has no doubt that you have read the book and absorbed the content. No footnotes are needed unless a source other than the book being reviewed is quoted.

1. A **final paper** will describe and apply learning from the course, as indicated in the outline below. The wise student will begin writing this 15-page paper near the beginning of the semester, as soon as the initial section of class is complete, and will continue adding integrative learning as the semester proceeds. Prior to turning in the project, the wise student will spend a substantial amount of time editing the project in its entirety, adding general conclusions and overall learning as the paper draws to a close. Papers written in anything but Times New Roman, 12 point type, will not be graded. Please do not double-double space. Use citations as needed and third person writing throughout.

* Title – begin two inches from the top of the page
* Introduction – a good introduction will begin without a “label” or subhead. The 1-2 paragraphs will delineate the direction the writer will take in the paper and will provide a synopsis of the paper’s parts.
* Part 1 – The Integration of Bowen Theory to the Individual
  + Include a plan for becoming a less-anxious presence.
  + Discuss how Family Systems Thinking has helped you develop as a leader, pastor, or minister.
* Part 2 – The Integration of Bowen Theory to the Family of Origin
  + Use insights gained from the family diagram and describe how your new thinking has brought about change in your family of origin as well as the nuclear family.
* Part 3 – The Integration of Bowen Theory to the Congregation
  + Compare and contrast the ministry of Jesus with the principles set forth in Bowen Theory by development of a philosophy of ministry.
  + Define how new direction for ministry is being integrated in the life of your congregation or parts thereof.
* Conclusion – a good conclusion will begin with a subhead and will recap in summary fashion the contents of the paper in order to draw a substantive conclusion.

The project should provide evidence of a semester of thinking, discovery, and integration which lead toward a new or renewed concept of congregational life. **Due December 7, this project will comprise 25% of the final grade.**

G. **Student Workload Expectations**

Class time – 42 hours

Reading – 35 hours

Assignments – 47 hours

**TOTAL = 124 hours**

# V. Grading Scale

A 96-100 C+ 84-85

A- 94-95 C 80-83

B+ 92-93 C- 78-79

B 88-91 D 70-77

B- 86-87 F 69 or below

**VI. Classroom-related Academic Policies**

A. Regular attendance and regular submission of assignments on due dates in the syllabus is expected. Each student must talk to the instructor about circumstances affecting his or her ability to attend class and complete assignments. A “T” will be noted in the attendance roster for students who develop a pattern (3 times) of missing up to half of a class session by either tardiness or early departure. Three “tardies,” as described above, will equal one absence. More than three absences (excused or unexcused) will result in a letter-grade reduction of the final grade and may result in failure of the course.

B. Work is expected on the due date. Late papers will receive no less than a one-letter grade reduction.

C. Turnitin.com

1. All written assignments are subject to required submission to www.turnitin.com to check for originality and style. The assignments that are required for submission will be described in the syllabus.

2. Students will create an account at www.turnitin.com. After doing so, the student will join the course page with the code and password supplied by the instructor. A list of assignments and due dates will be available on the course page.

3. Students will submit assignments by the due date and time and will be required to submit the assignments in a hard copy format as well.

D. Electronic Equipment Usage in Classrooms

It is expected that students will use technology (cell phones, laptop computers, iPads, etc.) during classes only for the purposes of class work. Therefore, students should turn off cell phones and refrain from texting and using laptop computers during classes except for the purposes of taking notes or doing research specifically authorized by the course instructor. Students who have emergency needs not covered by this policy must ask for an exception from the course instructor.

E*. Please review the Academic Catalog for requirements regarding Incompletes and Plagiarism issues. For more information on Library Services, please download the Library Handbook from the HGST website.*

**VII. Notes for Writing Assignments**

For MDiv, MASD, MAML, or MTS students: All writing assignments should conform to Kate Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 8th Edition. This includes matters of style and format. The instructor requires the use of footnotes for documentation when more than one resource is cited. The student must number pages. According to Turabian, page numbers appear in the upper right hand corner, except on pages with major headings (titles). Margins should be one inch on all four sides, except where major headings (titles) require a two-inch top margin.

All students shall utilize 12-point Times New Roman font throughout. The instructor prefers that the student **not** use presentation or report binders or folders. She prefers submission of papers with staples or binder clips.

Critical, or formal, writing differs from colloquial writing or spoken English at several points. The student should note the following guidelines for critical writing. The instructor expects students to follow these guidelines strictly for academic-style assignments. Failure to do so will be penalized.

* + - Avoid first- or second-person references, both singular and plural (“I,” “we,” or “you”). Keep the written projects objective and professional. The student must remember that imperative forms are second person.
    - Never use contractions.
    - Avoid passive voice construction (i.e., The student should write “God chose Joshua” rather than “Joshua was chosen by God.”). Some exceptions are necessary, but limiting the use of passive voice is a good policy.
    - Be sure that number and tense always agree (i.e., Do not write in one place that “Brueggemann argues . . .” and at another place “Brueggemann argued . . .”). Subject-verb agreement is imperative.
    - Spellcheck! Spellcheck! Spellcheck!
    - Grammar check works as well!
    - All pronouns should have clear antecedents. Avoiding “it is” and “there is” in the paper removes much of the ambiguity of pronoun usage.
    - Sentence fragments are unacceptable. Every sentence must have a subject and a predicate.

**PL/CS 640 Congregations as Systems**

**Class and Reading Schedule**

August 24

* Introduction to the Course and Class
* Discuss the concept of Emotional Systems.

August 31

* Discuss the concept of Differentiation of Self.

September 7 – **No Class – Labor Day Holiday**

September 14

* Discuss the concept of Anxiety & Reactivity.
* **Book Review of *Becoming a Healthier Pastor* is due.**

September 21

* Discuss the concept of Triangles.
* **Reconnect Story is due.**

September 28

* Discuss the concept of Cut-Off
* Discuss the principle of Boundaries

October 5

* Discuss the concepts of Family Projection Process & Multigenerational Transmission Process.
* Discuss the principle of Guiding Principles

October 12

* Discuss the concept of Sibling Position
* Discuss the concept of Extraordinary Relationships.

October 19

* Discuss the concept of Emotional Process in Society (Societal Regression).

October 26

* Review the eights concepts of Bowen Theory
* **Reconnect Story is due.**

November 2

* Discuss the Family Diagram papers and their significance.
* **The Summary Paper is due.**

November 9

* Class activity – (Ball Toss)
* Discuss the Summary Papers and student learnings.

November 16

* Discuss the concept of Organizational Systems based on the book *The Art of Systems Thinking.*
* **Book review of *How Your Church Family Works* is due.**

November 23 - **No Class – Thanksgiving Holiday**

November 30

* View the movie *A Bugs Life*
* Debrief the movie from a systems perspective.

December 7

* Review and final wrap-up
* Five “take-aways”
* **Final paper is due.**

*The professor reserves the right to adjust classroom topics as the course develops.*